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THE CURÉ D'ARS.

THE
CURÉ D'ARS:

A MEMOIR

OF

JEAN-BAPTISTE-MARIE VIANNEY.

BY

GEORGINA MOLYNEUX.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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THE CURÉ D'ARS.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE PILGRIMAGE.—INCREASING REPUTATION
OF VIANNEY, ETC., ETC.

IN the meantime, the fame of Vianney—in spite of the opposition which had been raised against his darling institution—continued rapidly to increase, and each day brought crowds of new admirers around him. Not only was the little village of Ars the resort of pilgrims from the most distant provinces of France, but from some of the most remote countries of Europe. “Before I had been to Ars and seen the *good father*,”

writes a man of the people, "I could hardly believe what is related in the lives of the saints. Many things appeared to me impossible ; but now I believe all, because I have seen with my own eyes all, and more than all, that is there recorded."

It was between the years 1825 and 1830 that the pilgrimage to Ars increased to that marvellous extent, that it came to be considered one of the wonders of the age. Many miraculous cures, said to have been effected before the relics of Saint-Philomène, contributed also, not a little to augment the moving population that thronged around this hitherto remote and silent district.

Many, too, were induced by their curiosity to undertake a long and fatiguing journey, in order to contemplate for themselves the ascetic features of the Curé d'Ars, who was everywhere spoken of as a model of penitence and self-mortification. A pilgrim writes

about this time, "There was that in the person of the Curé d'Ars which so absorbed and captivated the attention of all who approached him, that the very necessities of life were forgotten in his presence. Badly fed, badly lodged, rising before daylight, pressed, elbowed, rebuffed, the people braved cold, hunger, thirst, fatigue, privation of sleep, in fact, everything, only to hear a few words from the lips of this holy man. They would not have done so much for a king."

The concourse of people at Ars was often so great, that it became impossible to provide all with even the very poorest accommodation. In a chamber of only a few yards square, eight and even ten persons have been known to take shelter at a time.

One summer's day, in 1832, a company of nuns visited Ars; these poor sisters could nowhere find a refuge; every house was full of pilgrims, and it was not till

about ten o'clock at night, that a poor man, from pure charity, gave up to them his only room, where they improvised a dormitory with chairs and mattresses as they best could. At length the necessity of the case brought its own remedy; the inhabitants of Ars, in order to provide for the more urgent requirements of the strangers, now began to construct larger and more commodious houses. The greater number of the buildings which surround the church date from this period: a regular service of public carriages, having their offices at Lyons and Ars, were established in 1835; at the same time new roads were opened.

These improvements, together with the establishment of steamboats, and the consequent facility of navigating the Saône, opened to travellers such easy means of transport, as also added greatly to the importance of the pilgrimage. Every year

more than twenty thousand persons now entered this obscure village.

The Curé d'Ars, the centre and object of all this movement, was riveted to his post; from the year 1835 he was obliged to deny himself even one day's respite from his arduous and unceasing labours. That year he was commanded by Bishop Devie to return from the pastoral retreat, and formally forbidden ever again to appear there. "You need no retreats," said he, "and souls have need of you."

We have many letters before us, written by pilgrims in different ranks of life, all expressing the same profound love and admiration for the Curé d'Ars; the same eager desire to obtain a word, a look, or a blessing from him. We quote only a few passages from these communications, fearing to make our narrative tedious to the English reader.

A missionary, who was sent to assist

M. Vianney in his labours, wrote to an *habitué* of the pilgrimage of Ars, as follows: "To tell you that persons come here of all ranks, sufferers of all kinds, sinners of all degrees, is to tell you what you have yourself so often witnessed. As for the holy Curé, his existence alone is a miracle, which daily becomes more and more evident, and which compels the most incredulous to exclaim, 'Surely the finger of God is here!'"

A person, who had made frequent pilgrimages to Ars, and who finished by establishing himself there altogether, wrote to a friend: "I have the happiness of living under the direction of the good pastor. Notwithstanding the severe weather, pilgrims continue to come from the most remote distances; from Nantes, from Rennes, from the most distant provinces of Brittany. During the recent vacation, we had every day priests, nuns, monks of every

costume, of every order, and from every quarter of the world."

The missionaries did not come to Ars till the year 1853. They were preceded by the Abbé Raymond, who was for ten years the fellow-labourer of the Curé.

Before the year 1843, M. Vianney was left alone to meet the wants of the multitudes who thronged around him. He had no one to help him in his arduous labours, or to take note of the circumstances then occurring at Ars.

Referring to the year 1848, the Abbé Monnin writes: "This was a remarkable period; the *logique des passions*, for a long time suspended and retarded in its progress, produced at length the inevitable conclusions of the principles which had inaugurated the preceding *régime*. The terrible problems which had for a moment been laid aside, again rose up in men's minds. It was the period of extreme consequences.

The incredulous France of 1830, terrified at the results of a catastrophe which she had herself prepared, instinctively turned again towards the Church, and demanded of her the protection of her doctrines, the safeguard of her influences.

“Ars had a large share in this momentary triumph of religion: the charity of God’s servant there, his wisdom and his prayers, were the shield and the refuge of many troubled spirits. In the darkest days of this unhappy epoch, they turned to him as to a lighthouse in the tempest. Eminent individuals, fresh from the debates which were then agitating the destinies of France, were to be seen pressing round this little country Curé. One of the first magistrates of the Republic, whose name is connected with the most important judiciary episode of that epoch, came to Ars, made a retreat there, and did not leave *qu’après avoir accompli tous les actes de la vie chrétienne.*”

It has been calculated that, by the omnibuses alone, which brought the village into communication with the Saône and the station of Villefranche, more than 80,000 pilgrims arrived at Ars in one ordinary year.

These crowds of strangers from distant provinces and various climes were composed of all ranks and classes; the high and the lowly, the poor and the rich, were banded together in one common brotherhood ; some soliciting alms, others bringing their offerings, and all imploring the cure of their bodily and spiritual diseases. The lame, the blind, the deaf, sufferers from epilepsy, lunacy, and from every species of human misery, were here congregated together ; many of them having come on foot distances of a hundred and of two hundred leagues, supported by the most unflagging confidence.

Thus the Curé d'Ars saw passing before his eyes every day, and all day long, an interminable series of human woes, represented by an infinite variety of circumstances, as by an infinite variety of individuals, but all bearing evidence of having sprung from one common source. His heart was often wrung by the sad spectacles which he was continually called upon to witness. "A man should come to Ars," said he, weeping, "to know what sin is, and to judge of the evil which Adam has brought upon his poor family. One knows not what to do, one can only weep and pray."

At however early an hour in the morning Vianney entered his church, he always found there crowds of pilgrims awaiting him; many passed the night in the porch, in order the better to secure an interview.

M. Vianney exercised, indeed, so extra-

ordinary an influence over the minds of those who approached him, that many who had come to Ars, attracted by the rumours of the prodigies said to have taken place there, found themselves, as it were, riveted to the spot by an undefinable charm; even the most incredulous acknowledged the same spell; and the stranger, who had been led to this village by chance or caprice, experienced it equally with the devout pilgrim who had been drawn thither by hope and love.

The Abbé Monnin writes: “ *Au milieu même du mouvement qu’y entretenait l’arrivée quotidienne de douze voitures publiques, il y avait dans l’atmosphère de ce petit village quelque chose d’inexprimable. . . . Rien n’y ressemblait à ce qu’on voit ailleurs. Les figures y étaient reposées, les conversations sérieuses, l’animation même qui régnait n’excluait pas le recueillement. On n’était plus en*

France et au dix-neuvième siècle, on pouvait se croire en plein moyen âge, dans un de ces grands cloîtres au seuil desquels les bruits de la terre finissent."

CHAPTER II.

EXAMPLE OF M. VIANNEY'S DAILY LIFE, GIVEN IN THE
HISTORY OF FOUR-AND-TWENTY HOURS AT ARS.

M. LOUIS LACROIS, professor of literature at Nancy, came to Ars in the summer of 1857, when he had, for the first time, the opportunity of becoming acquainted with M. Vianney, and with the daily course of his life and ministry.

Immediately on his return to Lyons, and on the evening of the same day that he had left Ars, he wrote the following record of all that had passed under his eyes there. As M. Lacrois is represented as a man of high character, and as having been an

honour to the university of which he was a member, we give his letter in all its detail, thinking that it may furnish to the reader a fair example of the effect produced upon minds of his class by the remarkable man who is the subject of it.

“Two years ago,” writes M. Lacroix, “I determined to consecrate a part of my vacation to visiting Rome. . . . Some days previous to my departure from Paris, I met one of my friends, a theologian, and a sincere and enlightened Christian, well known as the author of many excellent articles which have appeared in our periodical reviews. I told him of my project, which he highly commended; but, exclaimed he, ‘Since you are about to make a pilgrimage, make one at the beginning as well as at the end of your journey. Go and see the Curé d’Ars; that will not delay you much, and you will find in him what you may seek in vain elsewhere. You study and teach his-

tory,' continued he; "seek then to comprehend and to seize the secret of it. Go to Ars, and you will understand how Christianity was established, how nations were converted, and how Christian civilisation was founded. There is a man there who possesses the creative influence of the saints of the past, who makes Christians like the Apostles, and in whom is reproduced all the marvels which we have hitherto only met with in books.

"Go then to Ars. In quality of historian, you must not neglect such a study; but lose no time, for the life of the Curé d'Ars draws towards its close.' My friend was right. Moreover, he spoke of what he had himself seen, and in a manner to excite my curiosity. I resolved to follow his advice; and consequently, instead of going direct to Lyons, I stopped at Villefranche. A violent tempest, which occurred immediately on my arrival at this place, forced

me at once to take refuge in the office for the coaches which pass between Villefranche and Ars. . At the appointed hour we started. Seeing the rain continued to fall heavily: 'Good!' said I, 'there will not be so many pressing round the Curé. I shall be deprived of the spectacle of the eager multitude, but I shall the sooner be able to approach him, and can take my departure without delay.' In the midst of these reflections, we arrived at Ars. The omnibus stopped at a good inn, where we were well treated, and not overcharged. I was told that the Curé had forbidden this too-general practice, and that he was obeyed. Knowing how difficult it is to moderate the charges of the proprietors of such establishments, and especially in places resorted to by pilgrims and travellers. I was struck with this proof, one of many, of the empire exercised by this holy man over the hearts of his people.

“ My first thought, on arriving at Ars,

was to repair to the church, where I was informed I should find the Curé. It never occurred to me that there was any other way of approaching Ars but by the omnibus, in which I and a few others had travelled ; I, therefore, imagined that we were the only visitors, and in my simplicity, I believed that the Curé was already awaiting us. What, then, was my surprise when, on entering the church, I found that it was filled with worshippers: the women in the nave, the men pressed closely together in and around the choir, and all in the attitude of profound devotion. Never had the antechamber of minister or sovereign presented itself to me with the same majesty ; and though I had approached the church absorbed by a curiosity which, perhaps, had for a moment excluded a due reverence, I felt at that instant all the dignity of this humble minister of the Sovereign King of heaven and earth. My eyes, however, searched in

vain for the Curé. They pointed to the door of the sacristy, and informed me that he was there confessing the men, each in their turn; those with whom he was then engaged had arrived the day before. As it was then five o'clock in the evening, there was evidently no hope of my seeing the Curé d'Ars that night, I being at the furthest extremity, and forming the last ring of a long chain, which commenced at the door of the sacristy. However, I did not complain; I was fascinated by the spectacle before me, and I esteemed myself fortunate in having this opportunity of observing how the Curé d'Ars terminated his day; whilst I proposed to myself to return to the church early in the morning, in order to see how he commenced it.

“In the meantime, the Abbé Vianney still remained invisible, and the door of the sacristy continued to open and shut upon the penitents who succeeded each other

at the tribunal of the holy priest. I watched their countenances: thoughtful, anxious, absorbed, on entering, whilst on coming out, they appeared calm, joyous, radiant. One of them, a young workman, as he passed by me, suddenly stopped, and, striking his forehead, exclaimed to himself, ‘Ah! *mon Dieu!* I have still something to say to him!’ and he went and placed himself at the furthest extremity of the file, in order that, in a day or two, his turn might again come round.

“It was now eight o’clock—the hour of evening prayer; they told me that the villagers never failed to attend, for the holy example of their Curé had brought them to the practice of all their religious duties.

“At this moment M. Vianney came out of the sacristy, and ascended the pulpit. His appearance at once riveted my attention, and I had no eyes for anything else. His whole exterior bore evidence to his extraordinary virtue and holiness, whilst his

attenuated face and person attested to the sublime and terrible effects of the severe mortification which he practised. He was dressed in his surplice, which he always wore; and his fragile and bending form, as he walked along, appeared grand and majestic. . . . His long and abundant hair fell upon his shoulders, and encircled his face as it were with a kind of white halo; as soon as he was in the pulpit all the congregation knelt down, and he said the evening prayer, but in so weak a voice that only a few indistinct sounds reached my ear. This evident exhaustion only rendered more marvellous his indefatigable assiduity, both in the church and at the confessional, where he sometimes remains whole days and nights together.

“When the prayer was said, he descended the pulpit—crossed the church, went out by a side-door—and returned to his house, blessing as he moved along

the people who on their knees hedged his path on either side.

“ I was now fully convinced of the empire which the Curé d’Ars exercises over his fellow-men: I had felt it myself. The object of my visit to Ars was attained; I might have left without further delay, and carried with me my evidence to this effect: but I still felt unwilling to depart before I had spoken with the Curé himself, and had received his blessing. I inquired what steps I should take in order to secure the attainment of my wish, and a man whom I took for the sexton informed me that by coming at four o’clock in the morning, I could see M. Vianney, and leave Ars the same day. Accordingly, the next morning, September 14th, 1857, eager to follow these instructions, I hastened to the church at four o’clock. I expected to be the first there, but a still greater surprise awaited me than that which I had experienced the night

before ; and to my great disappointment, I could only obtain a place a considerable way from that blessed door which gave access to the Curé d'Ars, and which I saw myself, like Moses, destined to behold from afar without being able to approach it. 'How long have you been here?' asked I of the neighbours whom chance had given me, 'Since two o'clock this morning.' And when did M. the Curé come?' 'At midnight.' 'Where is he, and how is he now engaged?' 'He is at the confessional behind the choir ; he is now confessing the women ; this is his usual occupation on Friday morning : he does not confess the men till after mass.' 'What, then, are all those doing whom I see there?' 'They keep their place, in order to pass on in their turn.' 'When did they come?' 'They were waiting at the porch when the Curé came at midnight, and when the doors were opened they took their places.'"

“ All this surpassed what I had seen and heard the day before. I was stupified; I knew well that men are capable of an immense endurance where their interest or their pleasure is concerned; but what I did not know, what I had never seen, was, that a man could be really disposed to make the same sacrifice of his time and his rest for purely spiritual benefits; this spectacle, so new to me, and which seemed like one of the scenes in the Gospel, deeply affected me. I abandoned myself as on the day before, to the happiness of praying and meditating in the spiritual atmosphere which this great servant of God shed around him. Nevertheless, I was not very well pleased with the sexton, who should have warned me that it was necessary to pass the night at the door of the church. I eyed him askance as he came and went, providing places for all, calming the impatient, and keeping order everywhere. Struck with the quiet

serenity and propriety of his manner, I made some inquiries about him, and I was informed that this pretended sexton was a gentleman of birth and position, who, cured and converted by the Curé, had devoted himself, from motives of piety and gratitude, to the arduous and thankless office, the duties of which he so worthily fulfilled.

“He was of great assistance to the Curé, maintaining order and taking the supervision of the church while he confessed; and this was no small labour with a priest who often confessed for twenty hours in the four-and-twenty.

“At six o'clock the Vicar performed the mass, whilst the Curé confessed the women. At length, after a *séance* which had lasted since midnight, he came out of the confessional with the calm and tranquil air which is peculiar to him, and entered into the vestry, in order to prepare for his mass.

“In the meantime I—unceasingly occu-

pied with the desire to speak with him for an instant, to ask his blessing, and to take my departure the same day—managed with considerable difficulty to glide into the vestry at the moment that the door was opened for the Vicar.

“ ‘Stand there,’ said his sexton, ‘when the Curé arrives he will perhaps consent to hear you before he approaches the altar.’ I followed this advice, but without success. The Curé d’Ars, who could at a glance judge of the spiritual condition of those around him, did not think proper to interrupt his usual course in order to satisfy my impatience.

“All that I gained by this attempt was to have a near view of him, to feel the sweet and yet piercing glance of his eye fixed for a moment upon me, and to be present while he invested himself with the sacerdotal ornaments for the celebration of the mass.

“I was struck anew while he changed his

dress with the extreme attenuation of that poor mortified frame, which rather resembled a shadow than a human body. This, however, did not prevent a singular vivacity in every movement and the most decisive energy in every gesture. I followed him to the altar of Saint-Philomène. It is at this altar that he has obtained the accomplishment of numerous miracles.

“When the mass was over, I thought that the Curé d’Ars would then be approachable ; it was the moment that he had assigned to me ; but I had been distanced from him by the crowds which were leaving the church : and I was again obliged to content myself with the part of observer, and with watching the continuation of the proceedings of the morning. The Curé now again came forth from the vestry, attired only in his simple surplice, and reappeared upon the steps of the choir ; multitudes of pilgrims pressed towards him,

bringing medals and chaplets to be blessed. Many presented to him young children and infants, in order that he might lay his hands upon them. When all were satisfied, he entered a little chapel at the right hand side of the church, where he received, one after another, several ladies who had come to consult him. At the end of about an hour, he again appeared in the choir, and the confession of the men immediately commenced. I was still unable to approach him; each time that I attempted it I was again separated from him by the crowd, and I was on the point of yielding to a feeling of impatience, but a moment's reflection was sufficient to overcome this movement. What, I asked myself—if this holy man can devote his whole time to administering to the wants of others, am not I able to spare a little of mine in order to secure an interview with him?

“It was now nearly nine o'clock in the

morning, the door of the sacristy—again inaccessible to me—recommenced opening and shutting as on the preceding day. Every one again took his place, and one after another, in regular succession, were permitted to pass in. There were some exceptions to this rule: many cunning and obstinate ladies succeeded in gliding to the door of the vestry, and even in passing through, in spite of every obstacle; this justly excited much irritation. Sometimes the Curé himself designated the person next to be admitted, but no one thought of complaining of these preferences.

“From time to time were seen, gathered round the altar, those who had been reconciled to God by confession, and to whom the Vicar administered the holy communion.

“This sublime drama had lasted ten hours, during which time M. Vianney had never allowed himself one instant’s repose, and yet he continued indefatigable; whilst I,

who had come four hours later, and had been a mere spectator, was utterly exhausted with fatigue, and begun to think of a retreat. Before yielding the point, however, I was determined to make one more assault upon the door of the inaccessible vestry, and with the help of the amiable auxiliary of the *Saint*, I contrived so to place myself, that, when he opened it, he saw me straight before him. He appeared to recognise me, and allowed me to pass.

“We both remained standing; and, not willing to occupy many moments of the precious time of such a man, I briefly proposed one or two questions, which I had prepared beforehand. To these questions he replied at once, decidedly, and without a moment’s hesitation, but at the same time without any haste.

“I hardly know whether I was most struck by the exceeding wisdom, as well as piety, evinced by his replies, or by the calm-

ness and presence of mind which they manifested under such circumstances. Since midnight he had never ceased to be besieged as he was at that moment. There was then a man kneeling before the confessional awaiting his turn. Dense masses of people without were pressing up towards the door like the waves of the rising tide, and still the holy priest continued his incessant labour, without impatience, without apparent fatigue, his heart always open, his mind ever prompt, his fragile person in constant activity.

“He had replied to my questions in as short a time as I had taken to make them. When he had finished, ‘One question more, my father,’ said I. ‘I am about to kneel at the Tomb of the Apostles at Rome. Give me your blessing, that it may accompany me during my pilgrimage.’ At the mention of Rome, a bright smile passed over the emaciated countenance of M. Vianney. ‘Ah,

you are going to Rome,' said he. 'Remember me in your prayers, at the confessional of the Holy Apostles.' I then bent my head, and he gave me his blessing. I kissed his hand and retired After breathing the fresh air for about half-an-hour, I returned to the church, in order to be present at an address which the Curé delivers every day before noon, and which they called his catechism.

"Certainly, the eloquence of the Curé d'Ars was not in his speech. His voice was so weak that I could hardly hear him. His eloquence was in his physiognomy, his gestures, but, above all, in his life and in his works.

"It would be impossible to describe the impression that he made upon his audience. They were pressed in a dense mass around him—at his feet, upon the steps of the altar, on the pavement of the choir, absorbed in breathless attention, and with their eyes

fixed upon him ; for to those who could not hear, it sufficed to see him. All was expressed in his eloquent countenance. When he spoke of sin, he trembled with horror. When he dwelt upon the offence done to God by transgression, he wept ; and when he enlarged upon the subject of divine love, he appeared radiant with joy.

“The hour of noon had struck, when the Curé d'Ars finished his discourse and returned to his presbytery ; there to seek, by prayer and mortification, strength to commence again in two or three hours his life of sacrifice and immolation.”

CHAPTER III.

THE GENERAL VENERATION AND CONFIDENCE WITH WHICH M. VIANNEY WAS REGARDED, AS ATTESTED BY VARIOUS LETTERS FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD.

THE time which the Curé d'Ars usually allotted to opening and glancing over the large importation of letters which the daily post never failed to bring him, was during his short and simple mid-day repast. It is stated, that so great was his dislike to flattery, that when, on opening a letter, he found it commenced in a laudatory style, he at once threw it into the fire; and that by means of this summary destruction, by far the greater part of a correspondence from which much information might have been gathered has perished. From the letters, however, which have been preserved, the Abbé Monnin

makes a large selection. We transcribe a few extracts, which will sufficiently show the high estimation in which the Curé d'Ars was held by his Roman Catholic brethren in all countries where his name was known, and amongst all classes and ranks of men :

From the South of Ireland.

“Holy and Reverend Father,—Having received the much desired answer to my letter, I hasten to send you my little offering; would that it were a great deal larger, for I cannot express to you the joy that I experience in thinking that the prayers of a man so beloved of God will be united to mine for the cure of my sister. I have the greatest confidence that they will be heard.”

From one of the most remote districts of Prussia, M. Vianney received the following letter :

“Venerable Pastor,—‘*Ask and you shall receive ; knock and it shall be opened unto you. Seek and ye shall find.*’ ‘*Go into all the world.*’ ‘*Cure the sick, strengthen the weak.*’ ‘*If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall remove mountains.*’ It is in calling to mind these words of Our blessed Saviour, that a poor mother of four young children solicits you with tears to interest yourself in her fate: I am a stranger to you, and separated from you by two or three hundred leagues, but I am not the less a child of God. Oh ! venerable father, you, who have received so many favours from heaven, listen to the recital of my sorrows. For four years I have hovered between life and death, it would be hardly possible to describe my sufferings My voice is wearied with crying, ‘*My God, thy will, not mine ; if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.*’

“We know there exists at Ars a man

raised up by God to help his brethren. In reading of the marvels which have been accomplished there, I said to myself, 'If I could go to Ars, and see this servant of God, I should be cured.' . . . Oh you who are animated by the Spirit of God, who do not live your own life, but the life of Our Saviour, I commend myself to you with a humble and confident heart; pray for my cure; may it be said to me, as to the woman in the Gospel, who desired to touch only the hem of the Saviour's garment, 'Go in peace; thy faith hath made thee whole.' In the midst of my sufferings and anxieties, I have asked the advice of my director: he commends the confidence that I place in you, and encourages me in the step I am taking."

The husband added, "I unite with my little children in commending to you my dear wife; she has suffered much, but with exemplary patience; with what happiness,

when she is cured, we shall address to you our grateful thanks. Praise be to Jesus Christ! May the Lord the God of peace bless us! and may the grace of Our Saviour ever be with us!

“Clément Haizman.

“Jeanne Schneider.”

Cases of every description were brought before the tribunal of the Curé d'Ars. At one time, he would be called upon to pray that God would direct the conduct of a Government in times of difficulty, and when the future and prosperity of a whole nation were pending. At another time, as in the foregoing instances, it would be private griefs and domestic sorrows which were laid before him, and for which his aid and sympathy were solicited.

“I have read in holy books,” writes one, “that those who have faith can work miracles; the strength of yours, M. le

Curé, has merited for you this gift, and I come with joined hands to pray of you to make use of it in our favour, and to solicit the cure of my poor husband of Him who has said, '*Ask, and ye shall receive.*'"

"God has sent us a great trial," writes another. "Since my husband returned from the Crimea, two years ago, his health has gradually declined. The remedies used have lost all their effect. In my deep anxiety, my only hope is in God. I submit to His holy will. . . . But His mercy is boundless, and I cease not to implore of Him to spare my beloved husband to his four little ones."

"I wish to obtain an interest in other and better prayers than my own. . . . If the Lord will turn away from us this heavy affliction, may His name be for ever blessed. If He strikes us, still may His compassion never fail us, but preserve us for eternity."

“So many persons have brought back from their pilgrimage the supernatural strength necessary to endure this sad life, and the knowledge necessary to guide them safely through it, that I long for the same consolation in a moment when I have so great need of God’s help and support.”

Generals of orders, superiors of distant communities, abbesses of convents, all consulted him in times of doubt and difficulty, and there were many who would take no step without his counsel.

A priest, who was at the head of an institution in the south of France, writes as follows :

“March 20, 1854.

. . . “A person has had recourse to my advice, who has been for some time the victim of the most painful trials; she is of a nervous and melancholy temperament, and it is probable that Satan avails himself of the physical disorder which shakes her con-

stitution, to excite in her a state of mind which tends to the monomania of suicide. This lady has a son, who promises to be a good priest. I come, venerable brother, in the name of mother and son, to appeal to your charity to obtain the cure of this poor widow, who is worthy of your compassion. I think, if you would write a few lines to assure her of your prayers, and to inspire her with the confidence that her trials will not be beyond her strength to bear, you would confer upon her a great benefit."

Another head of a college addressed to the Curé d'Ars this singular but ingenuous request:

"My Dear and Venerable Father,—I have a favour to solicit, which your inexhaustible charity will not refuse me: it is that you will promise me to ask of God, when you are in Paradise, to place me by your side, with my brother, my sister, my nieces, all my relations, and all my pupils; that you

will make this request beforehand, and also pray of Him to grant us, in the meantime, the gifts of his grace.”

A young man of eighteen years of age wrote to the Curé from London, to entreat his prayers that, if it were according to the will of God, he might be relieved from a severe mental trial, from which he had long been suffering. He writes, “Perhaps this affliction is good for me, but it may be that the great God, who is rich in mercy, may consent to grant to me the same advantages by other means, that is to say, to grant them gratuitously in answer to my prayers.”

A poor convict wrote to him from the camp of Sidi-Brahim :

“M. the Curé,—My sister writes me word that she has had the happiness of spending eight days in your parish. She has made a vow at the feet of Saint-Philomène, that if I should recover my liberty, she would conduct me to Ars to return

thanks to her. May I not myself solicit your prayers before the altar of your venerated saint? . . . If I was only so happy as to receive one word from you, my suffering would be alleviated; and I should have more courage to support it, if I could think that you, Monsieur, were occupied about the poor prisoner.”

Many, deeply impressed with the idea that Vianney possessed the power of penetrating the very hearts and consciences of those who addressed him, endeavoured, by the most confidential communications, to obtain from him that knowledge of themselves, to which by their own efforts they were unable to attain.

The following letter was from Paris :

“They tell me, my father, that you can read the consciences of men; look then into mine, and help me to discover what secret evil destroys the peace of my soul. Apparently I fulfil all my duties, and I am treated

with a consideration of which I am quite unworthy. Severe trials have disabused my mind of its illusions. I despise life, and yet I fear death. It seems there is something in me which proves an obstacle to God's grace, and which I cannot myself define. Sometimes I think it is a subtle pride. Sometimes a sin which I disguise from myself. Oh! you who can penetrate the hearts of others, do not fear to reveal to me all the evil of my state. I am ready to do everything that you would advise.

“ Sometimes I think myself a victim, but am I not, on the contrary, a proud sinner, who is not willing to pardon, in order that she herself may be pardoned? My father, I hope that notwithstanding the inevitable vagueness of a letter, your charity will look more favourably upon me than I can upon myself, and that you will write to me one of those words from God which strike and enlighten for ever.”

M. Vianney received the following letter from Paris, the evening before a general communion, at Nôtre-Dame :

“ Venerable Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ,—A great sinner comes to throw himself at your feet, and to supplicate you to obtain for him by your prayers the pardon of his iniquities. . . . The prodigal desires to return to his Father, but he is so weak, so miserable, so polluted by sin, that he needs the prayers of the just, before he can dare to approach God at His table. Pray, Venerable Father, that after having received the grace of reconciliation, I may be instructed in the way in which I should walk, and obtain strength to enter upon the path of duty, whatever the cost may be. I believe that I am ready to do everything which God may require of me, when once I have received absolution of my faults. May your great faith obtain for me this grace, for which I so ardently yearn.”

The following fragment is from the letter of a member of the Bonaparte family. It was saved from the incendiary to which its pompous beginning had condemned it :

“ The signal favours which it has pleased Our Lord to confer upon you, His dear servant, whose edifying life is a living sermon and a perpetual miracle, have induced me to entreat that you will remember in your prayers him who is now addressing you, and who in doing so feels that he has the honour to be communicating with one of the glories of the French Church—the holy priest who, by his ardent love to God and his inexhaustible zeal for the salvation of souls, is, without himself suspecting it, retracing for the nineteenth century the brilliant virtues of the Saint-Vincent de Pauls and of the Pierre Fouriers. I know that these compliments, or rather, that this simple homage rendered to truth, may offend your humility, but it is not for me to

say that you will refer these praises to the honour of the Divine Master, who has chosen you to be a light to Israel, as well as a help to your suffering brethren."

The following lines are in the handwriting of Viscount Edward Walsh, well known for his theological writings in the Roman Catholic Church :

"Sir and Venerable Curé,—Pardon the great liberty which I take in addressing myself directly to you, knowing how precious and how usefully employed your time is ; but the salvation of a soul, whom Satan would wrest from the Lord, is concerned, and the honour and repose of a respectable family are at stake. With this warrant, unworthy as I am, I come to you with confidence, to solicit your especial intercession with God and the Holy Virgin, in favour of a great criminal, but of a sincere *penitent*."

The Princes of the Church frequently wrote to demand the prayers and the coun-

sels of the Curé d'Ars. Many of them consulted him on the most delicate questions, concerning the administration of their dioceses. Many such letters are extant from the Archbishops and Bishops of Lyons, Aix, Orleans, Dijon, Annecy, Grenoble, Autun, Valence, Evreux, Gap, Rodez, Châlons-sur-Marne, &c.

The founder of the Society of I. S. Sacrament, writes to inform Vianney of the success of his undertaking, for which he had before solicited his prayers. It is stated that no important work was set on foot without having recourse to his advice, and seeking his co-operation.

We will close these quotations, with a letter from a member of a family whose name is well known in England.

“Grace-Dieu Castle, November 22.

“Most Reverend Sir,—Having heard much of the marvels, which Our merciful Saviour has deigned to accomplish by your hands,

and feeling that in glorifying God in you, I shall not wound your humility, I venture to write to you ; for though a stranger by nation and family, yet am I connected with you in the desire to serve our great God ; and to labour, though, alas ! so feebly and so unworthily, for the holy cause of the Catholic Church. I write these lines then, to entreat you to pray, first, for my beloved wife, and for the welfare of my numerous family ; secondly, for the conversion of a man of high rank, but unhappily an apostate from the Catholic Church, the father of my very dear friend, Lord Edward Howard, who has entreated me to commend him to your prayers ; thirdly, for my own father, who is a Protestant ; fourthly, for my temporal and spiritual wants. I have heard, very reverend sir, what God has done by you, and for you : if, then, you are the friend of the Monarch of Heaven, I beseech you to have pity on me, and to pray for me. If

in return, it is ever in my power to serve you, most gladly will I do so; but I again entreat you, for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to attend to the petition which I have made of you; remembering that if you withhold not the cup of cold water which I have asked, God on his side will give you infinitely more, both in this life, and in that which is to come.

“Pray then for me, O servant of God, and believe me always, with the most profound respect, your very humble servant in the Lord,

“Ambrose de Lisle Phillips,
“Deputy-Lieutenant to Her Majesty for the
county of Leicester.”

Some of those who addressed the Curé d'Ars petitioned for answers to their letters; but they did not consider how incompatible even the most limited epistolary communication would have been with that arduous series of ministerial duties, which

commenced at one o'clock in the night, and continued, without intermission, till eight or nine the following evening, thus leaving only four, or at most five, hours in the twenty-four for his private devotions, his study of the lives of the saints, his hasty repasts, and for such short intervals of repose as he allowed himself.

But, except for those who had the opportunity of closely observing the daily life of the Curé d'Ars, it must be difficult to form even a vague idea of his extraordinary existence.

CHAPTER IV.

CURES EFFECTED AT ARS.

WITH respect to the miraculous cures said to have been effected at Ars, we shall confine ourselves to simply transcribing the statements of those—or, rather, of a very few of those—who were the subjects of them, and with bringing before the reader such testimony as has been adduced in evidence of the facts narrated.

To begin, then, with our old friend, Catherine Lassagne. “M. the Curé,” writes this simple woman, in 1830, “tries to hide as much as possible the gifts of healing which he obtains; but he obtains many. I think he would rather cure souls.” It was

true that M. Vianney was often heard to exclaim, "I have asked Saint-Philomène not to occupy herself so much about the bodies of those who appeal to her, but to think more of their souls." "One of us," continues Catherine, "gave a poor woman a cap which had long been worn by M. the Curé. 'The Curé d'Ars is a saint,' thought she, as she placed it on the head of her son; 'if I had faith, my child would be cured.' The child had received a severe hurt upon his head. That night, when his mother was about to bathe the wound, she found that it had entirely disappeared, and not a trace of it remained."

The following statements are made by Madame Raymond-Corcevay :

"The first time I saw the Curé d'Ars was in the month of May, 1843. The good father was then very ill, and his recovery was despaired of. I was permitted to enter his chamber. When he saw me he made a

sign with his hand to bless me. I was suffering at the time from a chronic affection of the throat; all our doctors had given me up, and I was a living skeleton. This blessing half-cured me. Two days afterwards I attended, at three o'clock in the morning, the mass by which M. the Curé celebrated his own recovery, and returned thanks to Saint-Philomène. I consulted him about my condition. 'My child,' said he, 'in your case earthly remedies are useless; too many have already been administered; but God will cure you. . . . Address yourself to Saint-Philomène, and lay down your state upon her altar.' . . . I followed this advice; I threw myself at the feet of Saint-Philomène, and joined with all my heart in the prayers of M. the Curé. The effect was instantaneous. For two years I had not been able to speak, and for six I had suffered cruelly. When I returned to the house of Madame Favier, where I lodged,

I read aloud several pages of '*La Confiance en la Sainte-Vierge.*' I was cured.

“Two years afterwards, when I again had the happiness of forming one of the congregation of the Curé d'Ars, I asked him if he thought I should continue to preserve the voice which had been so mercifully restored to me. ‘Use it for God’s glory, my child,’ replied he, ‘and for the salvation of souls, and fear nothing.’ Then he added: ‘Listen to what I have to relate. A few days since a poor woman from the country came to Ars with a little girl who had been dumb from her birth. This good woman was confessing in the sacristy, when suddenly she stopped. “My child,” said I, “continue.” “Ah! my father, it is not possible . . . I have never before heard my child speak; and listen, listen! Oh, what mercy! my father, what mercy!” The child had indeed recovered her voice, and spoke distinctly. She was cured. Behold the

power of God. This poor woman,' continued the Curé, 'was too much overcome to be able to go on with her confession. She could only repeat, weeping, "What mercy! my God! what mercy."'

"I had a young relation," continues Madame Raymond, "who, at the close of the Great Revolution, became entirely deranged. She continued in this sad state for three months, during which time every remedy which the most devoted care and affection could devise had been tried in vain. Her poor mother, in despair, and utterly at a loss to know what further steps to take, brought her to me. I directed her to our beloved saint. 'My dear lady,' said he, 'make a *neuvaine* to Saint-Philomène. I will pray with you and all will be well.' So, indeed, it came to pass. On the last day of the *neuvaine* there was no longer a trace of the malady by which my young cousin had been afflicted, nor has there ever since

been the slightest appearance of a return of it.' ”

“In the month of July, 1842,” writes a brother Curé, “I made the pilgrimage to Ars for the first time. I shall never forget the impression that I received. The holy father was giving his daily instruction in the great hall of the Providence; when it was over I had a quarter of an hour’s conversation with him. I had heard many and various opinions concerning the miraculous cure of a lady of Bourg; and I informed him of some disparaging remarks on the subject, which had reached me.

“‘My friend,’ replied he, ‘let the people of the world say what they will; alas! how should they see? they are blind. Our Saviour might perform all the miracles which he accomplished in Judea, before they would believe; but He to whom all dominion has been given has not lost his power.

“ ‘ Last week a poor vinedresser, from the other side of the water, came hither, carrying on his shoulders a boy of twelve years of age who never had walked. This poor man performed a *neuvaine* to Saint-Philomène. On the ninth day his little son was cured, and he had the happiness of seeing him running by his side when he left Ars.’ ”

It is stated by the Abbé Monnin, that: “ Early in May, 1851, a gentleman came to Ars who was suffering from a complaint in his eyes, caused by congestion. His physicians had exhausted every remedy which their science could supply for his cure, but all in vain.

“ After two days passed at Ars, finding himself no better, he departed, in deep dejection of spirit. A young niece, who accompanied him, did not, however, share his depression. She immediately afterwards returned alone to Ars, and, on the advice of

M. the Curé, performed a *neuvaine* for her uncle. This *neuvaine* was, however, drawing to a close, and still no satisfactory news of his health reached her ; when, suddenly, M. Vianney said to her, ‘ My little one, I think you may depart. He for whom you are interested no longer suffers.’ [This was true.] When she arrived at her uncle’s house, she found him perfectly cured.

“ In the month of May, 1856, a young sister of the Community of Saint-Joseph, came to Ars. She was suffering from an affection of the throat, which had resulted in a total extinction of voice. It is stated that, after remaining a few days, she returned perfectly cured.

“ I, the undersigned, Curé of Anjas, Canton of Genolhac, certify the following fact:—Mademoiselle Marie Valerie Hermanie Martin, aged twenty years, novice in the Community of Saint-Joseph, had been suffering for nearly five months from a total

extinction of voice. She went to her family, in order to try the influence of her native air, but without any good result. Having lost all hope from human remedies, she turned her eyes towards Heaven. She had frequently heard of the miracles performed at Ars, and she determined to go there . . . After devoting two entire days to prayer, she confessed and received the Holy Communion. On leaving the church, she suddenly recovered her voice, and spoke with as much distinctness as before her illness. I had been in the habit of seeing her constantly up to the time of her departure, in her family, in my house, and in her convent. I was at Ars at the time of her visit there, and lodged in the same hotel with her and her mother. I was present at the Mass, where she received the Holy Communion, and where her sudden recovery took place. Six priests besides myself were witnesses of this miracle, and have joined with me in re-

turning thanks to Him who has thus manifested His power and goodness in answer to the prayers of the Venerable Curé d'Ars.

“ That day will, doubtless, form an epoch in their lives as well as mine.

“ J. Souchon, Curé Anjas.

“ Sept. 21st, 1856.”

“ I the undersigned doctor of medicine, residing at Vaus (Ardèche), attest that I have attended Mademoiselle Martin, novice at the Convent of Saint-Joseph, affected with a loss of speech, which resisted various modes of treatment. I began to despair of her recovery, and feared her case was hopeless. When I saw her on her return from Ars, she was perfectly cured.

“ I declare that this recovery is inexplicable to me by any natural means.

“ B. Ollier.”

“ Vaus, January 9, 1857.

“ Reverend and Dear Brother,—I am slow

in replying to your request for a certificate verifying the illness and the cure of Madame Daumas. . . . I have seen this lady, and she has spoken to me of her recovery, which appears to be entire; nevertheless, the doctor is not willing to give his certificate, alleging that he has not attended the patient *ex officio*. Happily, God does not require this attestation to establish His power and the holiness of the venerable Curé d'Ars. Juain."

A year after this letter, M. Toccanier, to whom it appears to have been addressed, received the following certificate of the reality of the cure referred to, signed by numerous witnesses:

"I, the undersigned, declare myself to have been the victim of an affection of the spinal marrow, which was pronounced incurable by the doctors. I went to Ars, June 20, 1857. M. Vianney spoke encouragingly to me, and desired me to perform

a *neuvaine* to Saint-Philomène. The day after my interview with this worthy priest, the pain which I had suffered up to that time left me, and I have ever since preserved the use of my limbs.

“The last day of the *neuvaine* I made, in company with a part of my family and several friends, a pilgrimage to Nôtre-Dame de la Garde, on foot, and without any assistance.

“(Signed) F. Daumas, J. Daumas, F. Daumas, Constant, Merchant, A. Rochebrune, Dominique Carle, Salomé, A. Audier, J. B. Godreau, Sublet, Goutro, J. B. Gauthier, Ant. Levesy. . . . Marseilles.”

“July 3, 1858.

“The undersigned declare that they were well acquainted with the situation of Madame Daumas, who had been entirely deprived, by an attack of illness, of the use of her limbs. They certify that from the

time of her return from Ars she has not ceased to enjoy the most perfect health."

" March 27, 1859.—We, Jean-Louis Chagnard, mayor and president, François Berge, curé, Jean-François Julien, chevalier of the Legion of Honour, Jacques Denizot, Jean Lombard, and Benjamin Pellissier, school-master, all members of the corporation for the parish of Montmorin, canton de Serres, diocese of Gap, in the High Alps, certify and attest that Rose Eysseric, aged forty-three, wife of Noé Arnaud, inhabitant of this parish, had from the month of July, 1858, completely lost her power of speech. Having vainly exhausted every medical resource, it only remained to her to have recourse to Providence: for which end the said Eysseric, full of faith, made a pilgrimage with her husband to Ars, in order to invoke the powerful prayers and intercession of the Venerable Jean-Marie-Bap-

tiste Vianney, Curé of that parish. On her return from her pilgrimage, and on the third day of a second *neuvaine*, she suddenly and miraculously recovered her speech, and she has ever since continued to articulate as clearly and as distinctly as before her paralysis.

“(Signed) Jean Lombard, François Julien, Jacques Denizot, Pellissier, F. Berge, curé, Jean-Louis Chagnard, mayor, Noé Arnaud.”

“We have ourselves seen and heard Rose Eysseric at Ars, on the day of the funeral of M. Vianney. She spoke very fluently, and was able to give us a detailed account of her cure.”—M. Monnin.

On September 9, 1858, M. the Curé of Cébazat, of the diocese of Clermont, wrote to the Abbé Toccanier, as follows :

“My Venerable Brother,—I write to entreat that you will join with me in thanking

God, who has vouchsafed through the intercession of Saint-Philomène, miraculously to restore to health one of my young parishioners."

One month later the following certificate was received at Ars:

"We, the Curé of Cébazet, have the honour to certify that Charles, son of Jean Blazy and of Marie Verdier, aged nineteen years, lost the use of his limbs on May 2, 1855, and that from that period up to the beginning of April in the present year (1858), he was confined to his bed, incapable of bearing any but a horizontal position, and a prey to violent suffering, which no medical treatment could avail to alleviate. That in the beginning of April, after a *neuvaine* to Saint-Philomène, performed in conjunction with the holy Curé d'Ars, he was able to walk a few steps with the aid of crutches, and, though not without diffi-

culty, to reach the church which is near his habitation.

“That in the commencement of August, desiring to go to Ars, in order again to commend himself to the prayers of the Curé of that parish, he was transported thither in a carriage, being unable to support himself on his feet.

“That the said Charles Blazy returned from Ars perfectly cured, having left his crutches in the chapel of Saint-Philomène.
. That since the fête of the 15th of August, he has been entirely free from all suffering; that he returned from Ars on foot, walking, without fatigue, a distance of eighteen kilomètres, and that he has ever since enjoyed perfect health.

“I am happy to affirm the miraculous character of this cure, and the same may be equally attested by all the inhabitants of Cébazat, who were as well acquainted as

myself with the sad condition of this young man.

“It is in order to render glory to God, whose mercy is great, and whose power is infinite, that I deliver this certificate.

“Bazin, Curé of Cébazat.

“Examined for the legalisation of the signature of M. Bazin, Curé of Cébazat.

“Duchet, Canon, Secretary.”

“Episcopal Palace, Clermont-Ferrand,

“1st October, 1858.

To these signatures were added the names of forty-five persons, bearing evidence to these facts; among which appear those of the Baron Jule de Vissac and of the Count de Neufville.

The following certificate to the same effect was given by the Mayor of Cébazat:

“Charles Blazy was confined to his bed for three years by severe illness; the pain he experienced was so constant and so violent, that he was obliged always to lie in a hori-

zontal position, and had no power to move his limbs. At Easter he experienced a slight alleviation, and was able to move a little with the help of crutches. At length, despairing of any real amendment from medical treatment, he set out on a pilgrimage to Ars. After he had remained there for a few weeks it was reported that he was radically cured, and that he had laid aside his crutches. At first this news was hardly credited; but when Blazy appeared, walking as well as he had ever done in his life, the greater number of the inhabitants yielded their assent to the miracle. To the truth of these facts we can conscientiously bear our testimony.

“Signed,

“C. Loire, Mayor of Cébazat.

“Rigaud, Assistant.”

Again, these signatures are followed by those of more than fifty of the most respectable inhabitants of Cébazat.

The following extracts are from a long letter, giving a detailed account of the severe illness and the extraordinary cure of which the writer was the subject :

“ La Palud, Oct. 2, 1858.

“ My Father,—Before leaving Ars I promised to send you an account of my long illness, and of the extraordinary cure which I obtained of God at the conclusion of a *neuvaine* in honour of Saint-Philomène; and now that the miracle is proved beyond a doubt, I sit down to perform this grateful task.

“ My malady, which lasted more than eight years, was judged incurable by all the physicians to whom I had recourse. The only encouragement they gave me was the hope that care might slightly ameliorate my health, and soothe my sufferings.”

Here follows a long and detailed account of her sad and terrible condition. For eight years, she states, she could neither read nor

bear to hear reading ; that during that time she was never able to kneel down ; and that if she attempted to walk even a few steps, the support of a strong arm was necessary.

“In order,” she goes on to state, “to modify this deplorable condition, no remedy which medical experience could suggest was left untried ; but if science could at times procure me some alleviation, it was powerless to heal, and I had no other resource but in God, no other remedy but patience and resignation.

“I had long meditated a pilgrimage to Ars, but divers obstacles had hitherto interfered with the accomplishment of my wish. Perhaps God had willed it so, in order that, having exhausted every human means, I might be brought to acknowledge their impotence, and to put all my trust in Him.

“I set out for Ars on the 18th of last August. My journey was accomplished without difficulty as far as Villefranche, but

on arriving at that place I was seized with the most violent cough, which continued for the remainder of my journey. When I reached Ars all the worst symptoms which had attended my long illness returned with such violence, that I nearly despaired of ever seeing La Palud again ; and earnestly prayed that I might not be left to die away from all my friends, and in a country where I was a stranger.

“ It was not till the 21st that I was able to see M. Vianney. In a short interview I explained to him the object of my journey, and earnestly besought his prayers that I might obtain power to kneel, to read, to go to church, &c. He gave me a medal of Saint-Philomène, and directed me to perform a *neuvaine* in honour of that saint. On leaving me he said, ‘ I will think of you ; if you have faith you will be cured.’ These last words recalled to my mind those of the Saviour, ‘ *All things are possible to*

him that believeth,' and I prayed to Jesus to increase my faith. The same day I commenced my *neuvaine*; it was on a Saturday, the 23rd, I was anxious to see M. the Curé; I passed seven hours waiting for him. On the 24th, I waited six hours; on the 25th, five hours—still all in vain; but what astonished me the most was, that these prolonged waitings occasioned me no fatigue. . . . On Wednesday, the 27th, I had the happiness of seeing M. the Curé. I asked him if he thought Saint-Philomène would grant me the grace I solicited. 'Yes, my child,' replied he, 'if you have faith.' These graces, indeed, were not long coming. The following day I was able to kneel long enough to recite the prayers of the *neuvaine*. On Sunday morning, the day upon which the *neuvaine* finished, I had the happiness of attending the mass of the holy Curé; at the elevation I knelt without difficulty—I felt transported! I then went alone to the

holy table, notwithstanding the crowd which pressed me on all sides. After the Holy Communion I returned alone to my place.

“In the course of this memorable day, I did many things which proved beyond a doubt the reality of my cure. I walked alone several times ; I again and again went to church ; I knelt upon the pavement, and remained a long time in that painful position. In the morning I heard a sermon ; at one o'clock I was present at the catechism of M. the Curé ; in the evening I was at the lecture. It was eight years since I had listened to any preaching. . . . Full of gratitude for the mercy which had been vouchsafed me, and of which I was so unworthy, I commenced, on that day, a *neuvaine* of thanksgivings, which continued till the day of my return to La Palud. Since that time I have been entirely free from pain,

and my strength, which had for eight years entirely left me, is completely restored."

" We, the undersigned, certify and attest that Mdle. Zoé Pradelle, aged 32 years, was seized, eight years since, with a chronic nervous affection, which entirely deprived her of the power of movement. That this malady resisted every effort of art, and that the utmost which the science of the most able physicians could effect was a very equivocal improvement in her state. That at last, despairing of any recovery by natural means, the said demoiselle, full of faith and piety, resolved to make a pilgrimage to Ars, in order to solicit the help and prayers of the worthy pastor there, who is venerated by all France ; that, at the end of a *neuvaine*, she was suddenly, and as by a miracle, cured. We have had it in our power to assure ourselves of the reality

of this cure, and to prove that the health of the said demoiselle now leaves nothing more to desire.

“ E. V. Rose, Curé.

“ L. Perrot, Vicar.

“ La Palud, 21 Decr., 1858.”

“ I, the undersigned doctor of medicine, resident at Avignon, certify that Mademoiselle Zoé Pradelle, aged thirty-two years, was seized eight years since by a nervous malady. . . . This malady had plunged her into such a state of nervous irritability that the slightest noise, the least moral emotion, aggravated her sufferings, and still further weakened her muscular power. She could only take a very small quantity of food, she could neither read nor bear to hear reading. When she attempted to walk she needed the assistance of a strong arm, and for three years and a-half she was absolutely deprived of this power. For six years I have known Mademoiselle Pradelle in this condition.

When, through my care, she experienced some amendment, she was still never able to walk alone, or to kneel down, or to relax in the observance of the *régime* prescribed. About six weeks since, I saw Mademoiselle Pradelle on her return from La Malon. She was then suffering as usual; to-day she has returned to me in a state of perfect convalescence! . . . This patient, who enjoys all the comforts of the most flourishing health, affirms that her recovery was miraculously obtained, in consequence of a *neuvaine*, performed in concert with the Curé d'Ars.

“Incompetent to resolve this question, I confine myself to the simple statement of the inexplicable change which has taken place in Mademoiselle Zoé Pradelle.

“Béchet, Doctor of Medicine.

“Avignon, September 7th, 1858.”

Such cases as those which we have adduced, and numberless others of a like nature, made a deep impression on the

public mind. Every year, thousands of patients, from the most distant countries, congregated around the Curé d'Ars, with a confidence which the experience of thirty years continued to confirm. M. Vianney received them all with the utmost kindness: he visited, consoled, and encouraged them. He gave them his prayers, his time, and his counsel; but he did not promise recovery to all. The friends of one poor sufferer, whose patience had been long and sorely tried, often endeavoured to extract from him some words of encouragement, in order that they might transmit them to her; but they could elicit no other reply than this: "It is a cross well placed." "But she suffers so severely, is there no alleviation to be hoped for?" "Yes, my friend, in Heaven."

When questioned, respecting any patient, whose recovery he did not expect, his usual answer was, "Patience, he will not suffer in Paradise."

A poor man, who was crippled by palsy, had long waited in vain for his cure at Ars. Still, however, he remained convinced that the will of the Curé was all that was needed for his recovery. "But," said he, "his humility spoils his charity." M. Vianney often went to visit him in his poor lodging. He exhorted, encouraged, and even endeavoured to amuse him; but he never gave him the least hope of recovery. "He has no need of his legs," said he, "to go to Heaven. He will go there without them; but, perhaps, he would not have gone there with them."

A poor monk was sent to Ars by his superior, who ardently desired his cure. "My friend," said the Curé, "we must will as God wills. He wills your sanctification, through the exercise of patience. You will see, at the hour of death, that you will have saved more souls by this sickness, than you would have done by all the good works

which you might have performed in health.” The monk’s superior, however, was not discouraged. By his order, the patient returned to Ars, two years afterwards. “No, no,” again insisted M. Vianney; “you will remain in this state. You are more useful to your congregation; you will do more good; you will save more souls.” On the sick man’s companions remarking, that his superior had great need of his services, the Curé made a gesture, which seemed to say, “God has need of no one;” and, he added, “*Il faut voir les choses en Dieu; il faut entrer dans les voies de Dieu.*”

CHAPTER V.

CONVERSIONS EFFECTED AT ARS.

“It will never be known in this world,” said Vianney, one day, “how many sinners have received their salvation at Ars. God, who needs no one’s help, has yet made use of me for this great work. If a still more unworthy instrument had been at hand, he would have taken it, and have operated through it a hundred-fold more good.”

In spite, however, of this lowly estimate of himself, the conversion of sinners appears to have been the one great object towards which all the thoughts of the Curé d’Ars converged—the one great work to which he consecrated his time, his strength,

his life. It is stated that during the fifteen or sixteen hours which he daily passed at the confessional, he heard on an average at least a hundred penitents. And he lived this life for upwards of thirty years !

Though so austere in his treatment of himself, Vianney yet evinced nothing but tenderness towards the poor sinners who approached him. The more humiliating their confessions, the deeper their past guilt, the more gladly did he welcome them, and with loving pity endeavour to lead them back to the ways of peace and holiness. He was frequently seen to weep bitter tears over the spiritual condition of those who sought absolution through his hands.

One day a poor man, who knelt at his feet in the attitude of a penitent, but whose heart continued unmoved, seeing his confessor in tears, exclaimed in astonishment, " But, my father, what need have you to weep ? " " Ah, my friend," replied the sympa-

thising priest, "I weep because you do not weep."

During the earlier days at Ars, and before the fame of Vianney had reached its zenith, an event took place which made a great impression upon the public mind—this was, the conversion of a man of great learning, from Lyons, named Maissiat. M. the Abbé Gaillard, Curé of Montagnat, was at Ars at the time, and on his requesting to have a detailed account of the change which had taken place in the individual named, he received from the new convert the following relation :

"Eight days since I left Lyons for the purpose of making a geological excursion through the mountains of Beaujolais and Maçonnais. In the carriage which conveyed me to Villefranche, I met, by chance, an old friend who was on his way to Ars, and who earnestly entreated me to accompany him to that place. 'Come,' said he, 'you will see a

Curé who performs miracles.' 'Miracles!' cried I, laughing, 'I do not believe in miracles.' 'Come, I say, and you will see and believe.' 'Oh!' exclaimed I, 'if you succeed in making a believer of me, that would be a miracle indeed.' 'Ah, well, come to Ars, if it were only for the excursion.' 'Ars,' I replied, 'is a name that pleases me. I have time before me: it is not far from the country I wish to explore. I will accompany you.'

"Arrived here, I was conducted by my friend to the house of Madame Gaillard, where we both occupied the same apartment. Early in the morning he awoke me. 'Maissiat,' said he, 'will you do me a pleasure? will you accompany me to the mass?' 'To the mass; I have never been there since my first communion. Ask of me anything else.' 'You will come to oblige me. It is there that you can see and judge of the Curé d'Ars. I only ask you to look at him well;

I will secure you a place where you can enjoy this satisfaction quite at your ease.' 'As to that,' said I, 'I am very indifferent about it, but I will do as you wish.'

"We arrived at the church; my old friend installed me upon a bench which faced the sacristy. The door soon opened, and the Curé bearing the sacred ornaments came forth. His eyes met mine; it was only a glance, but it penetrated to the bottom of my heart. I felt overwhelmed by that look. I bowed profoundly, and hiding my face in my hands, I remained motionless during the whole mass. When it was over—*j'essayai de soulever ma tête appesantie*—and I endeavoured to leave the church; but as I passed before the sacristy where the crowd pressed, I heard these words, 'Retire, all of you retire;' at the same time a light hand was laid upon my shoulder, and I was drawn, as it were, by an invisible force. The door was closed

upon me, and I found myself *vis-à-vis* with the gaze which had so confounded me. I stammered a few words: 'M. the Curé, I have a weight upon my shoulders which overwhelms me.' A voice of angelic sweetness, in a strange tone and which hardly seemed to proceed from a human breast, replied: 'My friend, you must cast off this burden as quickly as possible; kneel down and relate to me the history of your life. The Lord will charge himself with your burden; for he has said, *'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'*

"My agitation subsided a little at these words, and without further hesitation I related to the holy man the history of my life from my first communion. During this recital his tears hardly ceased to flow; while every now and then he exclaimed, 'Oh, how great is God's goodness; how infinite are his compassions.' I did not

weep ; but little by little I felt lightened of my burden, till at length I seemed to be restored to perfect peace. . . . 'My friend,' said the Curé, when I was about to leave him, 'you will return to-morrow.' . . .

The new convert then informed his interlocutor that the next day he was to receive his pardon, and that after that the holy sacrament was to be administered to him.

M. Maissait remained some time longer at Ars. When he left, it was not to undertake his intended geological researches, but to return to his home, in order there to meditate in solitude over the change that had taken place in him. He was a man of learning and an artist. Left an orphan at the age of fifteen, under the Reign of Terror, he followed a superior officer, who had adopted him, into Egypt ; there he became a Mussulman. Afterwards he tried Judaism, then he professed himself a Protestant. He

had since been a disciple of the Abbé Châteland, and of P. Enfantin ; and lastly, before he came to Ars, he had adopted the religion of Cabet. Two years after that time he died happily, and without having undergone any further change of sentiment.

In the year 1838, a man who was employed in the navigation of the Saône, accompanied some of his friends to Ars. This mariner had hitherto not only been indifferent to religion, but he carried his impiety so far as to scoff at all holy things. The very profession of Christianity he regarded as a mark of folly and weakness. On his arrival at Ars, he was induced by mere curiosity to visit the church. He had proceeded as far as the choir, where the Curé was confessing the men ; but suddenly seized with a species of vertigo, he was obliged to retire, in order to breathe the fresh air. He quickly, however, returned, but so great was his agitation, that it was observed by a lady

who was near him, and who kindly endeavoured to restore him to a more composed state of mind, after which she led him to the Curé. The sight of the austere and mortified priest made such an extraordinary impression upon the hardened sceptic, that he immediately commenced his general confession; after which he was seen to pray long and earnestly. He then received the holy communion, and left the church to all appearance an altered man. Some time afterwards he reappeared at Ars, when his whole conduct and demeanour still bore evidence to a radical change of character.

In the year 1840, a young man visited Ars, who was, it appears, distinguished for his scientific attainments, but who, unhappily had, with the knowledge which had been imparted to him, imbibed many of the infidel doctrines and sceptical ideas that were so sadly prevalent at that epoch.

The day of his arrival at Ars, two cures

had taken place; he wished to disprove them, but the further he examined, the more he questioned, the less possible was it for him to doubt the fact, that two invalids, strangers like himself, had come to Ars and had left cured. He determined to have a conference with M. Vianney: "Sir," said he, as he approached him, "I have no faith in miracles; nevertheless, I must admit that I know not how else to account for the cures of which I have been the witness; I would ask nothing better than to believe in something, and if you will help me to attain this end, I shall be much obliged to you."

"My friend," replied the Curé, "draw near to God, and He will draw near to you; His grace will enlighten your mind, and you will believe."

These words appeared to go directly to the heart of the young man, he became agitated and confused; but, after a short

moment of hesitation, he fell upon his knees. . . . Soon after he was seen to leave the confessional, his eyes suffused with tears, and a chaplet in his hand. . . . He remained a month at Ars, in order to be further instructed in the knowledge and practice of that religion which he had denied, but which he now esteemed it his highest honour and privilege to profess.

The Abbé Monnin affirms that in the year 1856, he was himself the witness of the sudden conversion of a man of eighty years of age, who had lived a wicked and impious life, and who was in the constant habit of reviling and blaspheming the holy name of God.

When the charitable Curé heard of the arrival at Ars of this unhappy man, he hastened—though he knew himself to be the special object of his scorn and hatred—to his hotel, entered his chamber, and throwing himself on his knees before him,

he cried out, with many tears, "Save your poor soul!!! Save your poor soul!!!"

At these words, according to the statement before us, the man, whose heart had so long been closed against every good and holy influence, was melted into tears, and the obdurate sinner of eighty years at once became a sincere and humble penitent.

On another occasion, a gentleman entered the sacristy, in whose air and deportment the practised eye of M. Vianney at once discerned the accomplished man of the world; for, attracted either by curiosity or by some other influence, individuals of this class were often seen amongst the crowds that thronged his confessional.

The stranger approached respectfully, and the Curé d'Ars, appearing to divine his intention, pointed with his hand towards the stool upon which his penitents were accustomed to kneel.

"Monsieur the Curé," quickly responded

his visitor, "I have not come to confess, I have come to reason with you."

"Oh, my friend, you have come to the wrong person for that. I do not know how to reason, but if you would seek consolation place yourself there"—designating with his hand the inexorable stool. "Believeme, many have done so, who have not repented it."

"But, Monsieur the Curé, I have already told you, I did not come to confess, and that for a very simple reason—I have no faith, and I believe as little in the confession as I do in anything else."

"You have no faith, my friend? Oh, how I pity you! A little child of eight years of age who knows his catechism knows more than you. I believed myself very ignorant, but you are far more ignorant than I, since you are ignorant of the things which it is most necessary for us to know. You have no faith, you say. Ah, well, then is there a reason for my further

importunity. I will hear your confession, and when you have confessed you will believe."

"But Monsieur the Curé, it is a comedy that you wish me to play with you."

"Kneel down, I repeat!"

It is affirmed that the tone of mingled authority and gentle kindness which accompanied these words, had such an effect upon the man to whom they were addressed, that he found himself upon his knees, almost without knowing it, and, as it were, in spite of himself. He then made the sign of the cross, which he had not done for many years, and commenced the humble confession of his faults. . . . When he rose up, according to the statement of our informant, he was not only consoled but believing; and, on leaving the little sacristy, where he had found the peace which he had so long and so vainly sought, the infidel of yesterday, not able to suppress his

joy, exclaimed, "What a man! oh! what a man! No one has ever spoken to me as he has done, or I should long ago have confessed!"

Such scenes as these were of daily, hourly occurrence. One Curé affirmed that ten men in his parish had been converted by the Curé d'Ars.

Another asserted that it was easy for him to discern, by their superior piety and goodness, those of his flock who had made the pilgrimage to Ars.

Yet, notwithstanding the great success which attended his ministerial efforts, the Curé d'Ars often appeared to suffer from sadness and depression of spirit. No one could divine the cause of his melancholy. To a friend, who one day questioned him on the subject, he replied, "I have seen myself on the brink of Hell. Oh, it was dreadful!" We have already noticed that M. Vianney was, at one time, sorely

tried by despairing thoughts of his own future. It would appear, from this sad rejoinder, that his melancholy proceeded from occasional returns of these dark moments.

But, however this may have been, and whether his soul was pained and harrowed by some secret thorn, or whether he was liable, from constitutional temperament, to seasons of depression, it is certain that suffering and anguish of spirit were no mere words with him ; and, it may be, that his own sad experience combined to constitute, in no small measure, that extraordinary sympathy with the afflicted, which formed so conspicuous a feature in his character.

And as the greater sufferers were the objects of the Curé's most tender sympathy, so were the greatest sinners the objects of his most devoted zeal and solicitude. The deeper a soul was sunk in vice and wickedness, so much the more earnest and persevering were his efforts to wrest that soul

from the toils of Satan, and to lead it to seek its refuge in the arms of Jesus Christ.

The Abbé Monnin states that, "The conversions which took place at Ars had this peculiarity, that they were solid and durable: that men given over, apparently, to a reprobate mind, the prey of passions, commonly judged to be the most incurable, moral beings, sunk to the lowest stage of degradation, yielded at once to the force and the fervour of his exhortations."

Among many other such cases, he adduces that of a man of sixty years of age, who had long abandoned himself to the constant habit of intoxication, but who had never been known to fall again into this sin, after he had been to Ars. The Vicar of the parish which this man inhabited, assured the missionaries that he was a most fervent and sincere penitent. Every month, he communicated; every Sunday, he attended the evening prayers in the church,

with his wife ; and he was careful on these occasions to take a by-way, in order to avoid the danger of passing the scenes of his former temptation, or of meeting his old companions.

The Curé d'Ars does indeed appear to have possessed an extraordinary, and to us an inexplicable power of attracting and impressing his fellow-men—in every rank of life—and of every class of character.

He often repeated, with evident delight, the exclamation of a poor penitent who, in the transports of his joy, cried out, “ My Father, my Father, how happy am I ; I would not for a thousand pounds that I had not confessed. Hitherto I have always felt a void here,” laying his hand on his heart. “ You have filled this void ; I feel it no longer ; I want nothing ; I am content.” . . .

CHAPTER VI.

MENTAL SUFFERING TO WHICH THE CURÉ D'ARS
WAS SUBJECT.

IN the meantime, notwithstanding M. Vianney's great success, in spite of the numerous letters which each day brought him, testifying to the gratitude of those who had been cured, consoled, relieved, and brought back to God through the efficacy of his prayers, and bearing evidence to the wonderful and miraculous results which had been obtained at the moment of his intervention, still the heart of the Curé d'Ars was constantly a prey to the deepest dejection.

It is affirmed by a brother priest, and one who had every opportunity of penetrating

and of studying the heart of this austere man—so far, at least, as it was accessible to mortal eye—that there habitually reigned there “*une amère desolation.*” He believed himself to be without faith, without intelligence, without discernment, without virtue, fit for nothing in short but to do harm and to be an obstacle to God’s work in the world. He shed many and bitter tears over his misery and shortcomings, and if the full light of the Gospel of Peace was in a measure veiled from his view, still in the moments of his deepest dejection it appears that he sought not his comfort from any human source, or in saint or in angel, but at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ.

“God has vouchsafed me this great mercy,” said he, “that he has put nothing in me upon which I can rely, neither talent, nor science, nor power, nor virtue. When I look into myself, I see nothing but my miserable sins; yet the Lord in His good-

ness does not permit me to see them all or to know myself thoroughly. This sight would drive me to despair. I have, indeed, no other refuge against this temptation to despair, but to throw myself at the foot of the tabernacle, *comme un petit chien aux pieds de son maître.*"

It may hardly seem possible to the reader, that this man, the marvel of his age, the glory of his church, the object of popular adulation, around whom admiring throngs were perpetually congregated, above all, whose ministry was attended by such extraordinary results, it may hardly seem possible that such a man should be the prey of the most severe and almost unceasing depression; the evidence, however, which is borne to this fact appears to be conclusive.

The Abbé Monnin does not ascribe this dejection to any physical fatigue, or to weariness of life, or to that yearning for repose which is so often felt by over-wrought

minds, or even to the regret with which Vianney never ceased to lament over his own imperfections. He ascribes it to the fear by which he was constantly harassed, of doing harm, and of offending God. He would willingly have resigned himself to every other species of suffering or trial which it might have pleased his Heavenly Father to lay upon him, if he could have believed at the same time that His love and favour were not withdrawn ; but it appears that this consolation was not permitted him, and he was constantly a prey to the torturing doubt as to whether his actions were pleasing to God or the contrary.

The difficulties and trials incident to his vocation pressed heavily upon him, and especially the impossibility of corresponding practically to his idea of the sanctity of the priestly office. “ Oh,” said he, one day, in a familiar conversation with a friend, “ how sad is the condition of a priest who is not

constantly recollected ; but in order to that, he must have quiet, tranquillity, retirement. It is in solitude that the voice of God is heard. I sometimes say to the Lord Bishop, if you would convert your diocese, you must make saints of your curés. Oh, my friend, it is an awful thing to be a priest. If a man knew beforehand what it is to be a priest, he would fly, like the saints of old, into the deserts to escape it. . . . The way to be a good priest would be to live *en séminariste*. . . . But all cannot do that. . . . The danger and the misery for we curés is, that the soul becomes dull and insensible. . . . They begin by being truly touched by the sad condition of those who do not love God ; but they finish by saying such an one fulfils his duties : so much the better ! Such another neglects the sacraments : so much the worse ! . . . And with this they are content."

M. Vianney seldom made his mental suf-

fering a subject of conversation ; occasionally, however, something of it transpired in his more intimate and confidential communications. Speaking one day with a brother priest, he said, " I pine away with grief in this sad world ; my soul is weighed down with sorrow ; nothing reaches my ears but painful and heartrending facts. I have no time to pray. I can hardly support this life. Tell me, my friend, would it be a great sin to disobey my bishop, by privately escaping from this place ? "

" M. the Curé," replied his confidant, " if you wish to lose at once all the fruit of your labours, you have only to yield to this temptation."

As he approached his end, the suffering of this afflicted man pressed more heavily than ever upon him. A few months before his death he was heard to exclaim, in a tone of ineffable sadness, " Oh, how melancholy is this life ! If I had foreseen, on

coming to Ars, the sorrows that awaited me, I should have died with apprehension on the spot."

Another day, when the heat had been overwhelming, and the crowd immense, the indefatigable priest had come out of the confessional more than usually exhausted. "I think," said he, as he stopped to look with envious eye at some chickens, who, after having scratched about the sand in his courtyard, had made themselves a nest where, the head buried under the wing, they were sleeping comfortably—"I think these chickens are very happy; if they had souls, I should wish much to be in their place."

It may be thought that his assiduous labours, the unceasing duties of the pulpit and confessional, must have distracted his mind from his grief; but it was not so. The great confidence which was reposed in him was a burden under which he never

ceased to groan. The prodigious concourse by which he was continually surrounded awakened in his soul a new source of fear and disquiet. It wounded his humility; it redoubled his fear of doing wrong; and augmented the weight—already so oppressive—of his pastoral responsibility. Instead of concluding that there must be in him some special grace, some charm or virtue—were it only a natural gift from Heaven—which drew such multitudes around him, he concluded, on the contrary, that he must be a hypocrite. Impossible, he reasoned, otherwise to explain the continued affluence of so many strangers. This people were evidently deceived; how, and by whom, he knew not; but what he knew only too well was, that he was the most unworthy and miserable of priests.

Although Vianney was so alive to the tendency of habit to deaden the sensibility, still the sentiment which he himself expe-

rienced at the aspect of sin became only more and more poignant. He appeared to possess that peculiar mental organisation which nothing exhausts, nothing lulls, into lukewarmness. And this, perhaps, explains his own oft-repeated remark, that he knew no one so unhappy as himself.

“Sinners,” said he, “are such an offence to God, that one is almost tempted to pray for the end of the world. If there were not a few pious souls upon whom to repose the heart and console the eyes, in the midst of the evil which surrounds us, this life would be hardly bearable. When one thinks,” added he, “of the ingratitude of man towards God . . . It is frightful! . . . If God were not so good . . . but he is so good . . . Oh, my God! what will not be our shame and confusion at the Day of Judgment, when we shall be made to see all our ingratitude. We shall then understand . . . but it will be too late. Our Lord will say

to us, 'Why hast thou offended me?' and we shall be left without reply."

Such reflections as these were peculiarly intensified on the days consecrated to the memory of Our Lord's sufferings. It was remarked that on these occasions the countenance of the Curé d'Ars underwent an entire change, his pale face and tearful eye betraying the most profound and bitter grief.

In spite, however, of the inward struggles and trials which we have described, the external appearance of M. Vianney was generally calm and serene, and the tempests which often raged within were not allowed to disturb the surface of his life. Whatever aspect the heavens presented to his troubled eye—whatever suffering weighed upon his weary heart, he went on his way with the same light step, the same tranquil and contented air.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CURÉ D'ARS AND LA SALETTE.

M. VIANNEY'S inward suffering was often complicated by particular causes, which still further harassed his mind and augmented his pain.

Prominent amongst these were the circumstances connected with the celebrated apparition of the Virgin Mary to the little Alpine shepherds, reported to have taken place at this time.

On the first announcement of this marvellous event, Vianney professed entire faith in *Notre-Dame de la Salette*. And he blessed and distributed a number of medals representing the scene of the apparition.

“I was anxious,” said he, “to possess myself of a fragment of the stone upon which the Holy Virgin stood; I have constantly spoken of this miracle to the Church.”

In the autumn of 1859, Maximin, one of the young shepherds upon whose evidence rested the truth of the miracle, came to Ars. It appears that he did not make a favourable impression there, but on the contrary was looked upon as a singularly unattractive and disagreeable child. This boy had a long conversation with M. Vianney; the consequence of which was, that the Curé refused any longer to sign the images of La Salette, or to give away the medals. When pressed for an explanation of this change of conduct—his invariable reply was, “If what the child told me is true, the miracle is disproved.”

The Abbé Monnin adduces the following conversation, which took place between

M. Vianney and himself on this subject, in the presence of a small number of witnesses:

“ ‘Monsieur the Curé, what are we to think concerning La Salette?’

“ ‘You may think what you like, it is not an article of faith.’

“ ‘May I ask what passed between you and Maximin in that conversation, which has caused so much agitation? What impression did it leave on your mind?’

“ ‘If Maximin did not deceive me, he did not see the Holy Virgin.’

“ ‘But Monsieur the Curé, they say that the Abbé Raymond wearied the child with questions; and that it was in order to escape from further examination, that he declared he had seen nothing.’

“ ‘I do not know what M. Raymond did, but I know that I did not weary the child. I merely said when he was brought to me. “It is you, then, my friend, who saw the Holy Virgin?”’

“ ‘ Maximin did not say that he had not seen the Holy Virgin; he said that he had seen a great lady. Perhaps there is some mistake underneath this ?’

“ ‘ No, my friend, the child told me that this was not true; that he had seen nothing.’

“ ‘ How did it happen that you did not demand of him a public recantation ?’

“ ‘ I said to him, “ My child, if you have spoken falsely, you must retract.” “ That is not necessary,” replied he : “ it will be good for the people ; many will be converted in consequence.” Then he added, “ I wish to make a general confession, and then to enter a religious house. When I am in the convent, I shall say I have told all, and have nothing more to say.” To which I replied, “ My child, that will not do. I must consult my Bishop.” “ Ah, well, sir, consult him, if you will ; but it is not worth the pains.” After this, Maximin made his confession.’

“ ‘ M. Vianney then added “ There is no need to be troubled about this matter. If the miracle is not true, it will fall of itself into discredit. If it is God’s work, men may try as they will, they will not be able to destroy it.” ’ ”

“ ‘ Monsieur the Curé, are you sure that you distinctly heard what Maximin said to you ?’ ”

“ ‘ Oh, very sure ! Many would maintain that I was deaf ! . . . What would they not, maintain ? It appears to me that that is not the way to defend the truth.’ ”

“ ‘ Maximin’s unequivocal declaration, *that he had not seen the Holy Virgin, that he had seen nothing*, placed M. Vianney in a state of the most painful doubt and perplexity. The leaning of his heart, as well as his respect for episcopal authority, inclined him to believe the miracle. Still, he could not persuade himself that he had not heard what had been so clearly and distinctly

uttered; and though, when he reflected upon the mandate of the Bishop of Grenoble, he was so far influenced by the value of his authority, as to affirm that the apparition might be credited, and to permit the pilgrimage, he yet struggled hopelessly against the doubts suggested to his own mind by the words of Maximin; and when pressed for his own personal opinion, his answer still was, "*Si ce que l'enfant m'a dit est vrai, on ne peut pas y croire.*"

This painful state of indecision continued for eight years, when, to the infinite satisfaction of his brother priests, and to the members of his flock, it was affirmed that the fluctuations and uncertainties of the *holy Curé* had ceased. In the month of October, 1858, M. the Abbé Toccanier wrote to a member of the Bar at Marseilles, who was known as the author of different writings upon "La Salette," as follows:

"Since my last letter, I have received

from M. the Curé a clear explanation of his return to his previous faith, which had been shaken by the unhappy retractation of Maximin.

“These are the details, which you will rejoice to learn: M. Vianney informed me that he had prayed to God to deliver him from the doubt which he had endeavoured, from respect to episcopal authority, to suppress, but which still harassed his mind, ‘For fifteen days,’ added he, ‘I suffered the most painful perplexity, which only ceased when I said, “*Credo*.” I was then anxious for an opportunity of manifesting my faith to a member of the diocese of Grenoble, and the next morning a priest entered the sacristy, with whom I was unacquainted, and inquired of me whether it were right to believe in La Salette. I replied “Yes.” I asked of God a temporal grace, through the intervention of the Virgin, invoked under the name of La Salette. . . I have obtained it.’

“Notwithstanding, then, the retraction of Maximin, M. the Curé d’Ars believes in La Salette.”

At the same epoch, M. Guillemain, Canon and Vicar-General of Belley, was commissioned to make inquiries of the Curé concerning the circumstances which had influenced his convictions relative to this subject. He gives the following report, after his visit to Ars for this purpose :

“M. the Curé d’Ars has endured much disquiet for about three months. One night his moral sufferings were so intense that he earnestly prayed the Lord for deliverance. He thought that he should obtain this grace if he performed an act of faith with respect to the affair of La Salette, and he accordingly cried out ‘*Credo!*’ He was instantly delivered from his pain, *comme si on lui avait ôté un sac de plomb de dessus les épaules.*

“In order to confirm the fact which had

taken place, M. Vianney prayed that a priest of note, from the diocese of Grenoble, might be sent to him. The following morning, whilst he was in the sacristy, an ecclesiastic, who announced himself as the Principal of the College of Grenoble, came to him, and, without further preamble, proposed to him this question, 'M. the Curé, what do you think of La Salette?' M. Vianney replied 'I believe that not only we may, but that we ought, to believe in her.' Our Curé has since affirmed that he has received a particular and signal grace through the intercession of Nôtre-Dame de la Salette."

M. the Abbé Gerin, Arch-Priest of the Cathedral of Grenoble, who came to Ars, October 12, gives the following account of the manner in which Vianney received him:

"I thank you for coming to see me. I have many things to tell you concerning

Nôtre-Dame de la Salette. I cannot express to you the anguish through which my soul has passed. My sufferings have been beyond description.

“At last, in the midst of all this painful agitation, I cried out, ‘*Credo.*’ That instant I recovered the peace and tranquillity which I had entirely lost. I besought of God to send me an instructed and efficient priest from Grenoble, to whom I could explain my sentiments on this subject. The next day the priest came. It would now be impossible for me not to believe in La Salette. I demanded signs in order to believe. I have obtained them. *On peut et on doit croire à la Salette.*”

CHAPTER VIII.

INSTALLATION OF THE MISSIONARIES AT ARS.—M. VIANNEY'S THIRD AND LAST ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE FROM HIS MINISTRY.

TOWARDS the close of the episcopacy of Bishop Devie, his thoughts were much occupied in devising plans for the future regulation of the Society of Young Missionaries, which had been formed under his auspices. One of his projects was to constitute Ars the *succursale*, as it were, of Pont-d'Ain, in order that the young men might pass a kind of noviciate, where they would have before them the edifying example of the Abbé Vianney.

The death, however, of this prelate occurred before this design could be practi-

cally realised, and it was left to his successor, the bishop of his choice, to carry his wishes into effect.

The Abbé Toccanier writes: "I had performed the duties of the Annual Retreat—at the Grand College of Brou—and was prepared to return to the welcome solitude of Pont-d'Ain, when I was informed by my superior that the Lord Bishop Chalandon, in fulfilment of the intention formed by his revered predecessor, designed us for auxiliaries to the Curé d'Ars, and that I was to be the first to represent the society in that capacity. The following day I was installed by M. the Vicar-General. The Abbé Vianney received me with his usual kindness. I remarked, however, a certain melancholy in his countenance, and a reserve in his manner which was not usual with him."

That yearning for solitude, which, however suppressed, had yet never ceased to be

the darling desire of the Curé d'Ars, was at this time revived with fresh energy. The change which had taken place at Ars, again appeared to him to offer a favourable occasion for abandoning a ministry, the responsibility of which he felt to be more and more burdensome in proportion as his fame and reputation increased.

From his peculiar constitution and character, this exceptional ministry brought with it for him peculiar and painful trials. It involved the entire abnegation of all the preferences of his heart, the complete sacrifice of all his natural tastes. The thought of flying to La Trappe, to Carmel, to the Grande-Chartreuse, or to some remote desert, *pour y pleurer sa pauvre vie et essayer si le bon Dieu voudrait bien encore lui faire miséricorde*, was for a long time his fixed idea. The details of his escape from Ars—when he remained for eight days concealed in the paternal home at Dardilly—have

already been laid before the reader; three years before that attempt he made another effort of the same kind. He left his presbytery, on that occasion, on a very dark night, and had proceeded as far as the *Croix des Combes*. There he suddenly stopped, and said to himself, "Am I at this moment acting according to the will of God? Would not the conversion of one soul be of more worth than all the prayers which I could offer up in solitude?" The response of his heart, which he regarded as the voice of God, determined him to retrace his footsteps.

Now, however, that a missionary was placed at Ars, he once more resolved to retire to some profound and inaccessible retreat, where he would be free from all pastoral responsibility, and at leisure to prepare to meet his God.

Accordingly, the day after the installation

of M. Toccanier, he made every preparation for his departure. In order to this, he was obliged to take into his confidence his old friend and servant, Catherine Lassagne, and also Jeanne Filliat, who, since the suppression of the Providence, had shared with her the charge of his *ménage*. But though he imposed upon them the strictest secrecy, and took every other possible precaution to prevent detection, his intention was discovered, his flight was intercepted, and a repetition of the same scene that had occurred on the former occasion—already described—followed; with this difference, however, that this time M. Vianney appeared to be more resolutely determined than ever to carry out his purpose. For a long while the tears and entreaties of his friends, and the grave admonitions of those upon whose judgment he was accustomed to rely with humble trust, were utterly vain; he con-

tinued inflexible and unwavering. It was even asserted by some of the witnesses of this scene that the tone of Vianney's voice, and the expression of his countenance—habitually so amiable and serene—betrayed a degree of mingled vexation, irony, and depression which he had never before manifested, and which caused much surprise.

It would be useless, and only tedious to the reader, to go over all the details of the long and painful struggle which took place between the obstinate priest and his devoted people, in this his third and last attempt at flight.

It will, perhaps, be sufficient to say, that he was in the end overborne, and induced, at length, to yield to what he believed to be a manifestation of the Divine will. From this time he regarded the longing of his heart for repose in solitude and prayer as a temptation; it was one, however, which

rose up under one form or another, again and again to trouble him; and he was repeatedly heard to say, “ *Que c'était une chose affreuse de passer d'une cure au tribunal de Dieu!* ”

CHAPTER IX.

HONOURS CONFERRED UPON M. VIANNEY.—HOMAGE
RENDERED TO HIS PIETY.

IN the meantime the fame and popularity of M. Vianney continued to be ever on the increase. It has, indeed, been doubted whether any other man in the present age has enjoyed so universal a reputation ; and when we consider how poorly he was endowed by nature ; when we reflect upon that intellectual inferiority, which he called his *ignorance*, we cannot refrain from expressing our astonishment at the extraordinary impression which he made upon the Roman Catholic world.

Whatever was the stage of their religious faith, whatever the class of society to which they belonged, the strangers who visited

Ars during the lifetime of the Curé all carried away with them the same sentiment of profound admiration and respect. Even those pilgrims who professed no Christian faith, were, in a manner, fascinated and enchained by the marvellous drama enacted before their eyes; and they regarded the singular man who performed in it the leading part as a perfect model of penitence and charity.

One individual belonging to this class, a distinguished scholar, but a sceptic, was heard to exclaim, in his enthusiasm, "*Je ne crois pas que depuis l'étable de Bethléem, on ait rien vu de pareil.*"

A celebrated poet, who had desired to make the acquaintance of the Curé d'Ars, was so carried away by his emotion after having seen and heard him, that he cried out in his presence, "*Jamais je n'ai contemplé Dieu de si près!*"

"It is true, my friend," replied Vianney,

pointing to the holy sacrament, exposed upon the altar, "it is true God is not far off. We behold Him there in the sanctuary of His love."

When the poet continued to address the Curé in terms of eulogy, the latter took him by the hand, and gently interrupting him, said, "My friend, I love these words of Saint-J * * *: 'If men knew us better, they would say of us more harm and less good.'" The poet then spoke of a church, in the edification of which he was interested. "The material church," responded Vianney, "will certainly be constructed. The important consideration is how to raise up the spiritual edifice in our hearts,—the living tabernacle where the Lord will be pleased to dwell."

When he had retired, after having received the blessing of the Curé d'Ars, Jasmin exclaimed, "What a type of holiness! That man is greater than his name!" . . .

Marceau, the marine missionary, came to Ars, on his return from his last voyage to the Islands of the Archipelago. He was asked what he thought of the venerable Curé. If he esteemed him a man of learning.

“Of human learning, no,” replied he, “but of divine learning, oh, yes. But what strikes me above all,” continued he, “is his beautiful simplicity. In him I have seen a little child, such as the Saviour loved, and therefore it is that God is with him.”

“On looking over the record of my past experience,” writes a priest, “I find amongst the days which have influenced my after life, and which I ought to observe with gratitude, the date August 21, 1832, preceded by these words: ‘Visit to Ars.’ It was then, indeed, that I first set my foot upon that hallowed ground, whither I have so frequently returned, where I have shed so many tears, formed so many resolutions,

and of which the very name penetrates the depths of my heart."

It would be superfluous to dwell upon all the marks of love, confidence, and admiration, which were lavished upon M. Vianney during his long ministry. The continued and ever-increasing conflux of pilgrims at Ars, for the space of thirty years, has been sufficiently noticed. The names of all the eminent men who were attracted thither, it would be impossible to recount. The Abbé Monnin states, that curiosity one day prompting him to look over the list of visitors at an hotel, he found there the most illustrious names in France, Belgium, England; distinguished men from London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Brussels, Cologne, Munich; travellers from the shores of the Mississippi, the Ohio, and La Plata.

We have before us a long list of the names of the princes and bishops of the Romish Church, who came to render their

homage to the humble priest of Ars. Amongst them is that of the Cardinal de Bonald. He had, during his visit, a long conference with Vianney, in his poor chamber. On going out from this confidential interview, he said to the Abbé Toccanier, "Do you know, monsieur, that the Curé d'Ars *voit les questions de bien haut?*"

Some days after his departure the almoner of his Eminence sent to the *holy priest* a beautiful chaplet, blessed by Pius IX., and accompanied by these words: "*Ars, terre de miracle! . . . Nous, n'avons fait qu'y toucher et son souvenir nous est reste vif et profond. . . . Peut-être un jour ce bonheur sera-t-il plus complet. J'aime à en garder l'espérance.*"

The Bishop of Orleans, Mgr. Dupanloup, came several times to seek edification at Ars. He confided to some friends, that the good Curé had tried to quiet his fears relative to his great pastoral

responsibility, with these words: "There are many bishops in the Martyrology, but hardly any curés. It is I, my lord, who have need to tremble."

Bishop Lyonnet, on his way to take possession of the see of Valence, came to ask the blessing of the Curé d'Ars. M. Vianney could not bear the idea of seeing a bishop kneel before him; however, as his Superior insisted, he consented to make upon him the sign of the cross; but falling at the same moment upon his own knees, he exclaimed, "My Lord, this blessing will rebound upon myself."

On the 3rd of May, 1845, whilst crowds of pilgrims were stationed round the church, awaiting the arrival of "*the saint*," a simple carriage drove up, and a priest, enveloped in a long cloak, descended; underneath the folds of his drapery, however, a white robe was soon discovered, and everyone cried out, "*Voilà le grand prédicateur!*"

It was thus that the people of France designated the great Dominican, Lacordaire. It was indeed he; and the following day the inhabitants of Ars had the infinite delight of seeing the illustrious orator, who is said to have thrilled the very hearts of his hearers, and whose preaching had just made an almost unparalleled sensation at Lyons—listening in the attitude of devout attention to the simple discourse of their beloved Curé.

Vianney dwelt much, on this occasion, on the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit, and earnestly exhorted his hearers to invoke his constant aid. P. Lacordaire appeared to be much affected by his earnest and affectionate address. He remarked afterwards, that if he had treated the same subject, he should not have used the same terms; but that he should have been inspired by the same sentiments. “This holy priest and I do not speak the same language,” said he,

“but I am so happy as to be able to testify to myself, that our thoughts are agreed.”

It was now Lacordaire's turn to preach. M. Vianney was very solicitous to hear the eloquent monk, and pressed him with earnest entreaties. The R. Père, however, only yielded to his wishes, when he was convinced that, in refusing to do so, he would fail to manifest his respectful deference, and he still complained at having to speak, when he would fain again have been a listener. “I came,” said he, “to seek counsel and instruction.”

If Lacordaire was impressed by the preaching of Vianney, Vianney in his turn was equally astonished and enraptured by the eloquence of Lacordaire. The elevation of his sentiments, the beauty of his utterance, above all, his amazing power of speech, produced upon the imagination of the zealous and devoted priest a species of enchantment.

“I can hardly venture to appear again in my pulpit,” said he. “I am like the Prince who, after having offered his horse to the Pope, did not dare to mount it again himself.”

M. Vianney appears to have been much affected by the humble and unaffected demeanour of this celebrated man toward himself. “Do you know what especially struck me,” said he, “during the visit of the Père Lacordaire? It was the idea that all that was greatest in science had come to humble itself before all that was least in ignorance. . . . The two extremes met.”

On some one's remarking, when the prodigious effect of the Conference at Lyons was discussed in his presence, that nevertheless few conversions were stated to have resulted from them—“There will be an immense result,” said he, “if the preacher has proved to the scholar that there exists a higher wisdom than theirs, and to our *beaux esprits*, that there are at-

tainments to be acquired superior to any to which they have aspired."

"It is necessary first to discover to them the beauties of the edifice, in order to excite their desire to enter into it."

Thus the favourable impression left by this memorable visit was complete and reciprocal. The celebrated pilgrim appears to have been much edified by the piety of the Curé d'Ars. In referring to the private conversation that he had with M. Vianney, he affirmed that he had gathered from him many useful hints, and much positive ground for hope with respect to the re-establishment of the *Frères-Prêcheurs*. *Apropos* to the instruction which he had received from the Curé d'Ars, he said: '*La science creuse la vie et ne la comble pas; la piété l'illumine, l'élève et la remplit.*'"

Not satisfied with seeing and hearing the Curé d'Ars, the pilgrims were all eager to possess themselves of some memento of him,

some object that he had blessed, or an image that he had signed, or anything that had belonged to him.

It had been Vianney's habit, when he left the chapel, to place his surplice upon the wall of the churchyard till his return, but he was soon obliged to discontinue this practice. It would quickly have been cut into fragments by the merciless people. It was the same with his hat, which, during the long *séances* at the confessional, he could not protect from these pious frauds, and so also with his cassock, which, in like manner, was attacked and mutilated on every possible occasion. During his catechisms, women, armed with scissors, crept softly behind his stall, and stole away locks of his hair. Sometimes when they pulled too hard, he would turn round and gently admonish them to leave him alone; but, generally, he did not appear to be aware of the feminine frauds which were practised

behind his back. Leaves were taken out of his breviary, till at length he was obliged to keep it concealed from the eyes of the pilgrims. His chairs, his table, his books, nothing escaped. The very straw was stolen from his bed. And even the trees which grew in his court-yard, and the little flowers which bloomed in the grass that carpeted it, were alike subjected to the cruel tax that was levied upon all and everything that lay within the sacred precincts of the presbytery.

The Curé d'Ars never could be brought to consent to the earnest and repeated solicitations of the various artists, painters, and photographers, who, at different periods, came to Ars with the hope of studying, and of being able to reproduce his remarkable physiognomy.

Nevertheless, attempts at his portrait were everywhere to be seen. Not only were they scattered in rich abundance over the

village of Ars, but they penetrated to the most distant and remote localities, and have been found in the châteaux of Switzerland, and amongst the household gods of the peasants of Uri and of Underwalden.

The continual exhibition of his portrait, which in every guise, and sometimes under the most grotesque forms, was affixed to the door of every house in the village, offended the eye and vexed the heart of the Curé. In the end, however, he became accustomed to this as to many other mortifications.

Nevertheless, as he took his daily walk from the presbytery to the church, pursued by the ovations of the multitude that thronged his footsteps, it was remarked that his air was embarrassed, and that he kept his eyes carefully bent upon the ground.

When, through any inadvertency on his part, his unwilling glance fell upon one of these offensive pictures, he would exclaim, "Always this vile portrait! How unhappy

am I! *On me pend, on me vend!* Poor Curé d'Ars!"

In the year 1852, an artist from Avignon, struck by Vianney's saintly expression of countenance, succeeded in taking a portrait from memory, which was, before the remarkable work of Cabuchet, the best that had appeared.

When it came to the turn of M. Cabuchet, he ensured, as he thought, the success of his enterprise by securing in advance the interest and co-operation of Bishop Chalandon. Previously to the artist's arrival at Ars, that prelate wrote a letter to Vianney, in which he earnestly prayed him to consent to sit for his portrait. The Curé, however, was still inflexible, and contented himself with saying, "I will comply with his Lordship's request, provided that he will afterwards consent to my departure from Ars."

Reduced now to the same condition with those who had made the attempt before him,

the young artist, nevertheless, did not lose courage.

He attended the catechisms every day, hid himself in the crowded congregation, assumed an air of attention, and modeled his wax in the crown of his hat.

Notwithstanding, however, this irreverent conduct in church, Emilien Cabuchet appears to have been a devout Catholic. He had not been many days at Ars before he expressed his desire to confess to the *good Father*. "Do not betray yourself," said the missionary to whom he first addressed himself; "and let no one suspect your design in coming here; you would be made to do penance by breaking your model." In spite of this caution, however, the pious artist could not refrain from informing M. Vianney that he was the author of the statue of Saint-Vincent de Paul, lately inaugurated at Châtillon; and upon the Curé's courteously congratulating him, he gathered

courage to say, "My Father, I am ambitious again to do something in order that the Lord may be further known and magnified in his saints." M. Vianney at once divined his object, and changing his tone, he exclaimed with some severity, "No, my friend, it is useless; neither for you or for the Lord Bishop will I ever consent."

A few days after this conversation, when engaged in his catechism, the Curé again recognised his penitent, who, in order to command a better view of his face, had installed himself directly opposite the little platform from whence he addressed the people. "Ah! my friend," said he, "you have distracted the attention of my people long enough, and of myself also."

The patient modeler was not a little disconcerted by this apostrophe; and though happily his work was now far advanced, he thought it discreet to disappear for a few days. When he thought that the circum-

stance was sufficiently effaced from the mind of the Curé he returned.

“My friend,” said M. Vianney, when he saw him again at his post, “have you then nothing to occupy you at home?”

“Monsieur the Curé, do you wish to dismiss me from your presence?”

“No, my friend, but I would fain have you excommunicated.”

“What crime have I then committed?”

“Oh, you know very well. Have you not again distracted my attention this morning?”

“One of the happiest events of my life,” afterwards remarked Emilien Cabuchet, “is to have made the acquaintance of the Curé d’Ars. It is necessary to have first seen the saints, in order to know how to represent them.”

About this time the *camail*—which appears to be considered a high and honourable distinction in the Romish Church—was

conferred upon Vianney by the hands of Bishop Chalandon ; and at the same period, upon the recommendation of Count Emmanuel de Coëtlogon, Prefect of Ain, and of the Bishop of Belley, and at the request of the Marquis de Castellane, he received the Cross of the Legion of Honour, in acknowledgment of his piety and of the services he had rendered to the Church. The Curé only wore the *camail* upon the ceremony of its reception ; and with respect to the cross of honour, those who were the bearers of it felt it necessary—in order that they might be able to state that he had accepted it—to induce in him the belief that they were relics which were presented to him. “ Oh,” said he, with a sigh of disappointment when he opened the casket that contained it, “ is it only that ?”

A few days afterwards, when the Prefect of Ain came to Ars to congratulate the new chevalier, the Curé said to him : “ You

should have conferred this decoration upon a more worthy object."

"That would have been difficult," courteously replied M. de Coëtlogon. "If the Emperor has bestowed upon you the Cross, it is not to honour you, it is to honour the Legion of Honour."

Apropos to the different honours conferred upon Vianney, we must mention, before we close this chapter, a curious contest which took place between the inhabitants of Ars and Dardilly, respecting the future disposition of his body.

The people of Dardilly had long looked with jealous eye upon the treasure possessed by Ars; and they now began to devise the means for securing something of it for themselves. They went to Vianney, and entreated him to make his will. They knew well that he reserved nothing of all the money which the piety of the faithful placed in his hands. What they wanted, was

something far more precious than gold or silver; and they earnestly besought him to bequeath his mortal remains to his native parish. The Curé, who did not know how to refuse anything, yielded to their wishes, and made his will accordingly.

The secret transpired—the alarm quickly spread, not only through the district of Ars, but through the whole diocese of Belley. The case was represented to the Bishop, who immediately interfered to allay the general apprehension. He asked the Curé why he designed to abandon, after his death, the parish which had for so long been the scene of his indefatigable labours? What reason he had for desiring that his body should rest in Dardilly?

“Ah,” replied the Curé, “provided only that my soul is with God, I care not where my body rests.”

The Bishop then preferred his own claim for that poor body, and Vianney, distressed

and ashamed at all these rival pretensions, promised to make another will, which he did the day before his death; when, according to the desire of his Bishop, and the wishes of his people, he definitely disposed of his remains in favour of the parish of Ars.

CHAPTER X.

PENETRATION AND SAGACITY MANIFESTED

BY M. VIANNEY IN HIS COUNSELS.

It would perhaps be difficult to imagine a more striking scene than that which met the eye of the stranger at Ars, when the Curé each day made his difficult way from the presbytery to the old house of the *Providence*, where the missionaries lodged. As soon as he appeared, every head was uncovered, and one general and unanimous cry of joy was heard, whilst every eye was turned with eager curiosity, or devout admiration, or reverential awe, towards the pale and emaciated priest, whose presence had power at once to efface every other thought.

The dense crowds that awaited his appearance now thronged his footsteps, only vieing with each other which should approach the nearest to his sacred person. Sometimes, as is said to have been the case with the saints of old, the devoted people endeavoured to cut off fragments from his raiment in order to make relics of them. Vianney, in the meantime, apparently as much unmoved by all these marks of reverence as if they had been addressed to some one else, quietly pursued his way, attentive only to the questions by which he was on all sides assailed.

For the edification of the reader, we transcribe a few of these questions, which, on an occasion such as that we are describing, were made in the hearing of the Abbé Monnin.

“Father, my mother is very ill; some say the case is hopeless, others that she may be cured. What are we to believe?”

“My father, one of my parents is threatened with loss of sight, would it be advisable to try the effect of an operation?” “My father, will my child recover? Will my husband be converted? Will my children be saved?” “My father, ought I to increase the number of my clerks? Ought I to abandon my business? Ought I to buy that manufactory? Ought I to live in the country?” “My father, tell me in what college the temporal and spiritual interests of my son would be the best advanced.” “My father, what are we to believe with respect to La Salette? Is the miracle of Rimini to be credited? What is your opinion of *the Hermit of the Mountains*? What are we to think of Louis XVII.?”

“My father, what is your opinion of such or such a style of dress?” This was a question which, it appears, was frequently addressed to M. Vianney. On one occasion

he received a letter, asking his advice with respect to a mode which then threatened to become fashionable, and which has since generally prevailed. The subject was treated with such exceeding gravity as to amuse even the austere priest himself. "Poor ladies," said he, in speaking of the tyranny of this mode, "They drag mountains after them ; they embarrass themselves, and they embarrass everyone else. It is well that they have enlarged the streets, but they have need to enlarge the doors also. Poor ladies ! with their fashions they suffer in this life in order to suffer in the next."

When the questions addressed to him were idle or indiscreet, or if they wounded his humility, he manifested his disapprobation by a gentle irony.

"My father," said a lady to him, "I have waited here three days without being able to approach you." "In Paradise, my child ; we will converse in Paradise." "My father,

I have travelled two hundred leagues to see you." "It was not worth while to come so far for that." "My father, but one word." "My child, you have already said twenty." "My father, is my husband in Purgatory?" "I have not been there." "My father, will you tell me what is my vocation?" "Your vocation, my child, is to go to Heaven."

Sometimes, when he divined that it was not the truth which his inquirers sought, but rather the satisfaction of their curiosity or self-love, his replies were more severe.

"My father," said a young girl, whose piety he thought was tainted by a species of egotism, "Tell me where I should pass my noviciate: with the *Dames de la Nativité*, or with the *Dames du Sacré Cœur*? I should prefer the former, because they know me."

"Alas!" replied M. Vianney, "*elles ne connaissent pas grand chose!*"

Those who came to ask the advice of the Curé d'Ars generally reposed with the most unlimited confidence upon the wisdom of his decisions. We have before us numerous examples of persons who, uncertain with respect to the vocation in which they could best serve God, needed but one word from him to bring them to a fixed and definite purpose, from which they never afterwards swerved, and of which they never repented. The extraordinary rapidity of his replies, which were often uttered before the question was hardly finished, and the great promptitude of his decisions, were the more remarkable, that M. Vianney was so humble and so distrustful of himself; and the subjects agitated were frequently of the most grave and solemn importance.

A person came to Ars, in order to ask the advice of the Curé, on a difficult case of conscience, in a matter of succession; the question was delicate and complicated.

Vianney at once gave his opinion ; then, seeing that his inquirer was not convinced, he asked permission to consult the ecclesiastics, who were that day assembled in conference at Ars. Opinions were divided ; many pronounced against Vianney, who, according to his usual habit, referred the question to the bishop. The Episcopal Council approved his decision, and Mgr. Devie, in his reply, begged him to communicate his letter to the solicitor, in order to remove from his mind all further disquiet.

A Curé in the diocese of Autun had a very difficult and intricate case of justice and of restitution to determine. He had taken much pains to inform his mind on the subject, in order to come, if possible, to a decided opinion ; he had read, reflected, consulted, but all in vain ; he still continued doubtful and perplexed. In this dilemma he came to Ars ; here his question was at once resolved, and he felt as if a veil

had fallen from his eyes. M. Vianney said but one word; still that word had been said by no one else, nor had he found it in any of the treatises which he had been studying; yet so vivid and instantaneous was the light which it threw upon the most difficult point of the question, that the astonished priest could not refrain from exclaiming, "M. the Curé, where did you learn your theology?"

M. Vianney silently pointed to his *prie-dieu*.

It would be easy for us to multiply, from the statements before us, examples of the surprising wisdom and penetration of M. Vianney, as manifested not only in cases which might seem to lie within the domain of his professional knowledge and experience, but also in matters where the temporal interests of communities, and even of nations, were concerned; and in questions of grave and solemn moment in political

science, which, though they had risen up to the surface of society, it would seem, could only be fitly answered by those who had endeavoured to sound the depths from which they had sprung, and to whom the mysterious laws of human thought were no strange study.

The Abbé Monnin, speaking of the excellent judgment of M. Vianney, and of the extraordinary influence which he exerted over the minds of other men, writes: “ *On ne peut pas dire que chez le Curé d'Ars cette sûreté de vue, cette rapidité de coup d'œil et cette rectitude de sens vinssent d'une grande perspicacité naturelle. . . Il semblait y avoir plutôt dans l'esprit de l'humble prêtre un type de vérité, un criterium latent mais infaillible; une clef qui lui servait à ouvrir les portes du cœur les plus secret et les mieux gardées; un fil qui l'aidait à se retrouver dans le dédale des consciences; une corde qui vibrerait à l'unisson de tout ce qui était droit et juste, et*

qui resonnait en désaccord de tout ce qui était mal et inexact."

And again, "*M. Vianney n'avait dans le cœur ni orgueil, ni ambition, ni avarice, et, par conséquent, dans l'esprit ni ténacité, ni faiblesse. Il ne courrait pas à la lueur vacillante de l'imagination; il n'était pas soumis à la tyrannie des sens. Il avait cette limpidité et cette justice du regard que donne la pureté d'intention, et que l'esprit lui-même met, avant l'expérience qui nous vient des années. Dans tous ses jugements la raison était sa loi, et la volonté de Dieu son flambeau. Rien n'affermait les démarches et ne rend le pied sûr comme de n'avoir à cœur que la justice et la vérité.*"

In admitting, however, the justness of the sentiments here expressed, and even in granting, so far as his piety is concerned, all that M. Monnin would claim for Vianney, we are still at a loss to account for the facility with which this man, whose natural

capacity was so inferior, that even in the days of his youth, and when he felt that his future vocation in life depended upon it, he was absolutely incapable of serious study or of any sustained application, we are still at a loss to comprehend by what power such a man was able, at once, and with the most perfect facility, to master the most difficult and intricate questions, and at a glance, as it were, or by one little word, to relieve the perplexity and embarrassment of many a one whose mental calibre was far superior to his own; yet such appears, beyond a doubt, to have been the case.

From all quarters men appealed to the *holy priest*, for his aid and encouragement, in favour of rising foundations, new establishments, infant communities, literary works, destined sometimes to a great future celebrity. With a word he decided a vocation, built a monastery, or caused a school,

a *Providence*, an asylum, or an hospital, to spring from the ground.

His marvellous penetration and sagacity could perceive, at the first glance, the difficulties to be encountered in the execution of an enterprise, the reasons for and against the undertaking of it. Projects which offered no real utility, or which appeared to proceed from an indiscreet zeal, he rejected with resolute determination; whilst his warmest sympathy and cordial co-operation were always at the service of those institutions, of which he believed the object to be truly good and Christian; and thus, in some way or other, the name of the Curé d'Ars is said to be associated with nearly all the great works in France which had their rise coterminously with his ministry.

It was, however, not very easy to induce M. Vianney to leave those fields of holy contemplation in which his soul delighted

to dwell, in order to mingle with the affairs of men; and it was often only by patient waiting and well-timed questions, that his friends succeeded in eliciting from him his opinion with respect to the great political events of his day.

Some time after the Congress of Paris, a representative of the religious press desired to know the opinion of M. Vianney with respect to a diplomatic event which had disconcerted his patriotism, and of which many wise and thinking men dreaded the probable result. He addressed himself to M. Monnin, and soon afterwards an opportunity of approaching the subject in question occurred. It was during a walk which M. Vianney was accustomed to take once a year, on the day preceding the second *Fête-Dieu*, in order to inspect the preparations for the temporary altars, that the following conversation, which has been literally transcribed by M. Monnin, took place :

“ M. the Curé, an event is now transpiring in Paris which troubles the consciences of Catholics, and afflicts the friends of the Government. A meeting of the plenipotentiaries of Europe has taken place, and words have been uttered which threaten a change in the imperial policy with relation to the Holy See. What is your opinion of this ?”

“ My friend, if we were righteous, those who rule us would be righteous also ; but God sometimes makes use of kings to chastise nations.”

“ Is it your opinion that the Emperor will withdraw his troops from Rome ?”

“ No, my friend ; it is that which constitutes his strength. His soldiers defend him better in Rome than in Paris.”

“ It has been suggested that you could perhaps warn *le Pouvoir* ?”

M. Vianney made a gesture which seemed to say, Who am I, to give such warnings ?

Then, he added, "A drop of ink would do that."

M. Monnin regrets that that drop of ink was not expended. He thinks it might have spared the rivers of blood which were afterwards shed. And prevent those tears, "*terrible à ceux qui les font couler.*"

The war in Italy was a source of profound grief to M. Vianney. To see two Catholic nations engaged in mortal conflict, the armies of the cross dyeing with their blood a Catholic soil, afflicted his very soul; and he dreaded lest the warfare, carried on beyond the Alps, should reach the home of him whom he regarded as the father of the christian family.

He knew that the cause defended by his country was that of a Government which had failed in its allegiance to the Church of Rome. And he regretted that France had not made the condition of her alliance, the reconciliation of that Government with

the "Mother Church." As the struggle was prolonged, his trouble and anxiety increased. He wept bitterly during the *Te Deum* which was sung after the battles of Magenta and Solferino; and when asked by his friends, a few days before the peace of Villafranca, how long this war would last, his answer was, "As long as our sins."

When, a short time after the much-desired peace between the Emperors had been concluded, Vianney and his friends were mutually congratulating each other, and indulging in the bright hopes inspired by this union between two great Catholic Powers, he suddenly interrupted the cheerful conversation, by a deep sigh, and exclaimed, "*Ah! mon ami, ce n'est pas fini.*"

CHAPTER XI.

FURTHER DETAILS OF M. VIANNEY IN HIS CAPACITY OF
CONFESSOR.

WE have already remarked that, out of the eighteen or twenty hours which constituted M. Vianney's working day, sixteen were passed at the confessional, and this, not for a week or a month, but for more than thirty years—for a lifetime !

It is very difficult to comprehend how he supported these long *séances*, with all the other labours of his mortified life, without being utterly prostrated by fatigue. It appears, however, that his faculties retained all their vigour and freshness to the very end of his long and arduous career.

M. Vianney generally left his church at

seven o'clock in the evening, in winter, and at nine in summer; and at midnight, or sometimes at one o'clock in the morning, he again returned to recommence his unwearied task.

So dense was the crowd which at all times thronged the precincts of his chapel, that individuals have been known to pass several nights at a time under the porch, without being able to advance one step towards that sacred spot where they expected to leave all their sorrows, and to be absolved from all their sins.

When, at six or seven o'clock in the morning, the Curé d'Ars left the confessional, in order to approach the altar, the congregation was so closely packed, that the services of a kind of temporary police were absolutely necessary to make a passage for him, and to secure his personal safety. At ten o'clock he shut himself up in the sacristy, where he passed a short time in

private devotion ; after which, he confessed the invalids and those whose stay at Ars was unavoidably limited. At eleven o'clock he had his catechism ; when it was over, and he descended the little pulpit, from whence he had addressed his hearers, he was more closely besieged than ever by the devoted people ; and it was not without difficulty that the two men, whose attendance was almost constantly necessary, in order to keep some check upon the crowded audience, it was not without difficulty that they were able to pierce a way for him through that human rampart, and conduct him in safety to one of the little chapels at the further end of the church, where he confessed some of the pilgrims. When, after his hasty repast, and his daily visit to the missionaries, which also occupied but a few moments, the Curé returned to the church, he again passed through two lines of living fortifications, which had been re-

formed during his short absence, and which became more and more compact in proportion as he advanced. As soon as he was safely installed in his chapel, which was often a work of considerable difficulty, he recited his vespers on his knees; after which, he again confessed the pilgrims until five o'clock.

It might be supposed that the continual and absorbing labours of the Curé d'Ars must have rendered it impossible for him to give his undivided attention to each individual; but it was not so. There was not one penitent who might not have believed himself the special object of his solicitude. In the midst of that dense multitude which appeared to be constantly on the point of breaking through all restraint, and manifesting some violent display of feeling, he listened to the individual kneeling before him as if there were nothing else to engage his attention. He possessed, it seems, that

rare faculty of being able to concentrate every thought and feeling upon the labour of the present moment. The past he abandoned to the mercy, the future to the providence, of God. It is true that in order to be able to see all he devoted but a few moments at a time to each of the penitents; but those few moments produced the most extraordinary effects. Many of the pilgrims affirmed that the first moment their eyes met those of the *holy priest* they felt, as it were, carried off their feet, and lifted to so great a height above all the miseries of this world, as to become entirely indifferent to them. Others, that they felt themselves transported into limitless space, and borne up without effort to those blessed regions from whence God looks down upon the affairs of men, embracing, at the same moment, universal space and infinite time, and beholding the ultimate triumph of His justice and mercy.

M. Vianney is said to have possessed the most extraordinary power of penetrating the thoughts and of reading the hearts of others. M. Monnin states many instances where he discovered to the penitents his knowledge of circumstances which they had wished to conceal from him, and which, it appeared, could not have been divulged by any natural means, whilst he reproached them for making only half a confession.

A highwayman, the terror of travellers, who had long haunted the roads and highways for the purposes of robbery and plunder, and who was known to have perpetrated many frightful crimes and excesses, suddenly became the victim of a severe and painful illness. In his extremity, he was told that those invalids who went to Ars immediately obtained their cure; and he determined, as he said, to try his chance also. Accordingly, he presented himself to the Curé. Vianney, at first, refused to re-

ceive him ; and the indignant suppliant was preparing to take his departure, when the idea occurred to him to make yet another effort, and he returned to the church. M. Vianney saw him, and caused him to be summoned to his presence. He entered the sacristy, saying to himself, "M. the Curé will have me confess, but I can do that according to my own idea." When he had made his pretended confession, M. Vianney, who had hitherto kept silence, said, "Is that all?" "Yes," replied the penitent. "But," responded the sagacious priest, "you have not told me that on such a day, in such a place, you committed such a crime." He then related to his astonished hearer the whole history of his life, and with more exactness of detail than he himself could have recorded it.

It is affirmed that this extraordinary revelation so deeply affected the guilty man, that he at once became a true penitent;

and that not only he left Ars cured of his bodily disease, but the subject also of a true and lasting conversion of heart.

A lady, who for twenty years was under the direction of M. Vianney, states that she never sustained any trial or affliction without receiving from him a previous warning of its approach. Sometimes she did not understand the prophetic meaning of his words till the blow had struck. On other occasions he was more clear. "My daughter," said he one day, "call up all your strength, you are about to pass through great trials." In six months the unhappy mother had lost her two sons.

An old man, who had long neglected every religious observance, came to Ars. He was a stranger in the parish, and no one knew how long it was since he had confessed. The Curé entreated him with tears to perform this duty. He resisted. M. Vianney, laying his hand on the heart of the stranger,

said kindly, there is some obstacle there. How long is it since you have confessed? "Forty years." "My friend," replied the Curé, "it is more than that, it is forty-four years."

Numerous such statements as these could be adduced, did we not fear to weary our readers by too much repetition, as also many examples of sinners to whom M. Vianney, after their confession, made the following reproaches: "You have not told everything; you have not spoken of that fault. . . You have not declared that up to this time you have deceived your confessors; that you were at such a place, with such a person, at such a time—that you committed such a fault, yielded to such a temptation." To others he simply said, "That is not all; you have still something to say, or you have yet one fault to confess."

Not a day passed in which M. Vianney, discovering in the crowd some sinner more guilty, more blind, or more hardened than

the rest, did not sign to him to approach, or taking him kindly by the hand, gently lead him to the confessional. M. Monnin states that the principal conversions effected at Ars were the fruit of these direct and affectionate appeals.

CHAPTER XII.

M. VIANNEY'S STYLE AND MANNER OF CONVEYING
INSTRUCTION.

“WHAT master had you in theology?” said one to M. Vianney, in a slightly ironical tone.

“The same with Saint Peter,” replied he, simply.

It has already been made sufficiently evident to the reader that the marvellous influence exercised by M. Vianney over his immense congregations, was not the result of science, or scholastic attainments, or intellectual superiority. The charm of his eloquence did not consist in the chiseled language of classical lore; he knew nothing of the arrangement of periods, the har-

mony of words and syllables. He spoke in his native idiom, that is to say, in the unstudied and imperfect French common to the people of the country. Nevertheless, his presence alone seemed to act like a spell upon his audience. When he appeared in the pulpit, every breath was hushed and every eye fixed upon that frail and emaciated figure, that face attenuated almost to transparency, those eloquent and piercing eyes, which are said to have possessed the power of penetrating the very soul of all who confronted them. When he commenced his discourse, and, in his peculiar manner, with sudden spontaneity uttered his sublime and original thoughts, the rapt and excited people believed themselves in the presence of one of the ancient prophets, uttering his message in the language of inspiration.

It would, indeed, be impossible to describe, except by its results, the impression

produced by the preaching of this extraordinary man. Men of the world, who entered his church to satisfy their idle curiosity, left it in tears of sorrow and contrition.

Others, who had been accustomed to scoff at religion, and who believed that the unique ministry of the Curé d'Ars would furnish food for their impious mirth, were seen to retire, at the close of his address, overwhelmed with confusion, and deeply convinced of their own sin and misery.

An eminent physician, at the time an unbeliever, relates that when he first heard the Curé d'Ars, he had no idea of the spectacle which awaited him; and that when M. Vianney commenced his catechism, he was seized with an uncontrollable desire to laugh; not wishing, however, to scandalise the devout congregation that surrounded him, he hid his face in his hands. At the end of five minutes, he continues to state, all incli-

nation to laugh had abandoned him, and tears, earnest tears, were rapidly coursing each other down his cheeks. What he heard was so different from what he had imagined, that he thought himself in a dream.

The only preparatory labour to which M. Vianney applied himself previous to his public exhortations was to that of prayer and meditation. From the confessional he passed directly, and without delay, to the pulpit. And yet it is said nothing could surpass the ease, readiness, and assurance with which he appeared in his capacity of preacher. This, perhaps, arose in a great measure from his entire forgetfulness of himself, and from his consequent indifference as to what others might say or think of him. Whoever composed his audience, though bishops and princes of the church, and other illustrious persons, were mingled with the crowds that thronged his pulpit, he never betrayed the least emotion or embarrassment.

And we believe that if his whole congregation had been formed of popes, and kings, and cardinals, it would have been just the same ; he would have said neither more nor less.

Though of so timid and modest a nature, when he passed through the closely packed population assembled in his church at the hour of his catechism, he was no longer the same man. He had the air of a conqueror ; with his head erect, his countenance radiant, his eye absolutely dazzling in its lustre.

“ You have never felt afraid of your congregation ?” asked a friend one day. “ No,” replied Vianney, “ on the contrary ; the larger my audience so much the happier am I.”

It is a singular fact, that though M. Vianney was always forward to proclaim his own ignorance, and could lay himself open with the utmost indifference to the criticisms of the learned, by his unscholarly style, and by

the frequent violence which he did to the rules of grammar and syntax, it is a singular fact that he was yet peculiarly alive to the attraction of superior intelligence and cultivated faculties in others. The highest praise that he could bestow upon any one was to say, *qu'il avait de l'esprit*. And when the good qualities of a priest or a layman were enumerated in his presence, he hardly ever failed to complete the panegyric, by these words: "*Ce que j'aime bien surtout, c'est qu'il est savant.*" The gifts of rhetorical skill, he especially admired and appreciated; and he often blessed God for having bestowed these beautiful talents upon other men, though he seemed to disdain them for himself.

But, whatever may have been the critical inaccuracies or grammatical defects of Vianney's peculiar mode of expressing himself, it must, nevertheless, have possessed some great and extraordinary attrac-

tion; or how else can we account for the amazing effect which his words produced, the irresistible authority with which he seemed to carry everything before him, and which it appears none were able to withstand. On this subject, M. Monnin writes:

“The language of the Curé d’Ars was sudden and impulsive. He discharged his thoughts like an arrow from the bow, and with them his whole soul. In these effusions, where the pathetic, the profound, and the sublime were found side by side with the simple and the homely: the most striking and beautiful thoughts were expressed; and if the phraseology of M. Vianney was accompanied by the grammatical carelessness, it possessed also all the spontaneity and all the charm of originality. We have often tried to write down at the moment what we heard, but it has been impossible to seize and give form to the sentiments which have most deeply affected

us. The wind does not record what it murmurs in the dome of the forest: the sea does not transcribe what she whispers on her shores: and, in the same manner, what is most divine in the heart of man, cannot be inscribed with pen and ink."

M. Monnin has, however, contrived to seize and put on paper some of these fugitive thoughts, and from the examples which he adduces we transcribe the following:

"The earth is a bridge, upon which we pass over the water; its sole use is to support our feet. . . . We are in the world, but we are not of the world, since we say every day, '*Our Father, which art in heaven.*' . . . We must, then, await our reward, till we are at home in the paternal house; that is why Christians are exposed to crosses, contradictions, adversities, scorn, calumnies. So much the better! . . . But this surprises them: they think that if

they love God a little, they ought to be exempt from all trial, free from all suffering. We say, there is one who is ungodly, and behold, everything goes well with him; whilst with me, do what I will, everything goes ill: this is because we so little comprehend the value and the privilege of affliction. Men say, sometimes, God chastises those whom he loves, but this is not true. Trials are not chastisements for those whom God loves, they are mercies. . . . We should not think of the toil, but of the recompense. A merchant does not reflect so much upon the pain and labour which his business costs him, as upon the profits which he expects to draw from it. What are twenty years, thirty years, compared with eternity? And what have we to suffer? A few humiliations and a few offences—biting words. *Cela ne tue pas.*

“We are much—and we are nothing: there is nothing greater than man, and no-

thing smaller: there is nothing greater, when we consider his soul, and nothing smaller, when we consider his body. Man occupies himself about his body, as if he had only that to care for; when, in fact, he has only that to despise.

“Without the death of Jesus Christ, the united efforts of every man that has ever existed would be unable to expiate one sin, even the smallest untruth.

“In this world, men throw a veil over heaven and hell. Over heaven, because, if we knew its beauty, we should abandon the world, and seek, at all costs, to gain it. Over hell, because, if we knew the anguish which is there endured, we should endeavour, at all costs, to escape it.

“In heaven, God will place us as an architect places the stones in a building: everyone will have the place for which he is fitted.

“There are those who have lost all faith,

and who will only believe in hell when they find themselves there.

“It is not God who dooms us to eternal torment, it is we who doom ourselves. The lost do not accuse God, they accuse themselves. They say, I have lost God, my soul, and heaven, through my own fault. . . . No one has ever perished because their guilt was too great to be pardoned; but many have perished in consequence of one unrepented sin.

“If a lost soul could say ‘*My Father*, I love you!’ there would be no more hell for that soul; but alas! that poor soul has lost the power of loving which it received from God, but which it has not exerted. There is no more happiness for that soul, no more peace, because there is no more love.

“If the poor lost souls had only the time which we throw away, what a good use they would make of it. If they had but

half-an-hour, that half-hour would depopulate hell.

“ If we rightly understood our privileges, we might almost esteem ourselves happier than the saints in heaven ; they live upon their revenues, but we may each moment increase our treasure.

“ Our sins are as a grain of sand, by the side of the mountain of God’s mercies.

“ Good Christians are like birds with large wings and small claws, and which never touch the ground, lest they should be taken, and not able to mount up again. They make their nests upon the summits of rocks, the roofs of houses, and other elevated places ; and so the Christian should always keep upon the heights. As soon as we allow our thoughts to gravitate towards the earth, we too are seized and taken.

“ A pure soul is like a beautiful pearl ; whilst it is hid in its shell in the depths of the sea no one thinks of admiring it, but if

you submit it to the rays of the sun, all eyes are attracted by its brilliancy. It is thus that a pure soul, which is now hidden from the eyes of the world, will one day shine forth before the angels in the light of eternity."

CHAPTER XIII.

EFFECT PRODUCED BY M. VIANNEY'S PREACHING.

GREAT as was the effect produced by the teaching of the Curé d'Ars at all times, it is said that those who had only heard him in his catechisms could but half appreciate him ; that it was in his homilies or sermons that his soul took its highest flight, and the rapture and enthusiasm of his hearers reached its climax.

On these occasions it was more difficult than ever, even in anticipating the hour, and waiting long for the opening of the church-door, to secure a place in the pressed and impenetrable ranks of that vast multitude, where every class and condition were

mingled together, and which, like the pilgrimage, offered the strangest variety of social and national distinctions.

In spite, however, of the heterogeneous elements which composed his great audiences, the Curé d'Ars knew how to unite them all in one bond of common sympathy—in one action of rapt and earnest attention.

What added not a little to the eloquence of the speech of M. Vianney, was the eloquence of his physiognomy. The large forehead, the venerable head, surrounded by a halo of silver hair, the extraordinary spirituality of his expression, above all, the singular light of his penetrating eye, combined to form a species of fascination under the spell of which the proudest spirits unresistingly bent, and scepticism declared itself vanquished.

To give the reader some idea of the manner of his Sunday preaching, and of the

effect which it produced, we adduce the following extracts from the account of the author of "*Souvenirs de Deux Pèlerinages à Ars.*" "The day we heard M. Vianney, he chose for his text these words: '*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*' What simplicity and elevation of soul! What seraphic enthusiasm in his words and action! The tone of his voice at once excited sympathy and tenderness. It was not the voice of a man, or of a woman, nor yet of a child—though it most resembled the two latter; coming more from the head than the throat. It became in proportion, as M. Vianney grew more animated, so high and shrill, that an inward trembling crept through me as I listened. His discourse, certainly, was not distinguished by order, or method, or form, but it was distinguished by an evident faith, a penetrating accent, by words of truth, and

transports of love. In listening to him, it was difficult not to recognise the soul of a saint, unfettered by any other rule or measure, than by that of a supernatural inspiration.

“The audience appeared to be under the influence of the most profound emotion. Sometimes his hearers seemed to be raised altogether above this world, and to be already transported into the regions of everlasting light. His speech was full of holy inspiration. A hundred times he uttered the same things, and a hundred times he gave them a different form. No one could repeat what he heard ; but everyone’s heart was penetrated. . . . A text from the Gospel was for him a fire, which he ignited ; a luminary, of which he assembled the rays ; an incense, of which he endeavoured to multiply the perfumes ; no bitter reproaches or sharp rebukes ever came from his lips. The sword of the word he seldom handled.

If he painted the terrible realities of another life, it was with a cry of love that he finished. He preferred to point out the infinite mercy of God, and His incomprehensible love. Sometimes moments occurred when no one dared to look at him ; when even pious curiosity felt abashed, and every eye was bent before him, dominated as it were by a mingled sentiment of humility and veneration."

The great impression produced by M. Vianney's preaching arose, doubtless, in no small measure from the lively feeling, and the deep emotion which he himself evinced, and which, by the mysterious law of moral contagion, was conveyed to the hearts of his hearers.

On one occasion, when he had taken for his subject the transfiguration of Christ, the idea of the rapture of the disciples on Mount Thabor, brought so forcibly to his mind the future blessedness of the soul called to the

contemplation of the glorified humanity of Our Lord in Heaven, that, in a transport of delight, he cried out, "We shall see Him—we shall see Him! Oh, brethren, have you ever thought of that? We shall see God; we shall see Him as He is, . . . face to face:" and for a quarter of an hour, he did not cease to weep, repeating over and over the same words, "We shall see Him—we shall see Him!"

Another time, when the Last Judgment formed the theme of his discourse, at the words of the terrible sentence, he burst into tears and groans, and could only repeat, "Cursed of God! Brethren, do you understand. Cursed by a God, who would only bless. Cursed by a God, who only desires to love and pardon. Cursed without remission. Cursed for ever. Ah, what a terrible doom!" The congregation were transfixed.

In 1830, having learned that in some

parts of France the crosses had been pulled down: "They may do what they will," he cried, in the midst of his exhortation, and with a movement of indignation, which made a lively impression upon his audience, "They may do what they will, the cross is stronger than they; they cannot overthrow it When Our Lord appears upon the clouds of Heaven, they will not be able to wrest it from His hand."

Three years afterwards, when the cholera had visited Marseilles, Paris, and menaced Lyons, the Curé d'Ars commenced his sermon with these words: "My brethren,—*Dieu est en train de balayer le monde.*" It is stated that these simple words, and the tone in which they were pronounced, so powerfully affected an artist, who was present, that, from that moment, he was an altered and a better man.

The following extracts are transcribed from the fragment now before us of a

sermon preached by M. Vianney on the last Sunday in the year:

“The world passes away and we pass away with it. Kings, emperors, all disappear, all are engulfed in that eternity from whence no man returns. One thing only is of moment, that is, to save the soul. . . . God has placed us for a little time in this world, in order to exercise our faith and love, but no one remains here. If we were wise, we should never cease to lift our eyes towards Heaven, our true country; but, on the contrary, we allow ourselves to be carried hither and thither by the world, by riches, by temporal enjoyments, and we little heed the only thing which should occupy our thoughts.

“Look at the saints, how detached they were from this world and from all material considerations, with what contempt and indifference they regarded all earthly things! A holy monk, having lost his parents, sud-

denly found himself the possessor of great wealth. 'How long,' he asked of the friends who brought him this news, 'how long is it since my parents died?' 'Three weeks,' they replied. 'Tell me if a person who is dead can inherit?' 'Assuredly not.' 'Ah, well then, I, who have been dead twenty years, cannot possibly inherit from those who have been dead only three weeks.' Ah, the saints understood the nothingness, the vanity of this world, and the happiness of forsaking all for the bright hope of eternal blessedness.

"Go from world to world, from kingdom to kingdom, from riches to riches, from pleasure to pleasure, you will never find your happiness. The entire universe could no more satisfy an immortal soul than a grain of wheat could satisfy the craving appetite of a starving man.

"When the Apostles had seen their Lord go up to Heaven, they found the world so

melancholy, so vile and contemptible without him, that they gladly welcomed the suffering death which would take them quickly out of it and once more unite them to their dear Master. . . .

“Our Lord recompensed the saints by sensibly revealing himself to them. Thus, Saint-Stephen, whilst they stoned him, saw Heaven open over his head. Saint-Paul was rapt in ecstacy, and saw what it was not possible for human tongue to describe ; Saint-Teresa saw Heaven, and declared that ever after the world and everything in it appeared to her but as dust and dross. . . .

“My children, let us console ourselves with these thoughts. In Heaven we shall be with God, who is our Father ; with Jesus Christ, who is our brother. . . . With the saints and angels, who are our friends. . .

“A king, in his last moments, said with regret, ‘I must then resign my kingdom, and go to a country where I know no one.’

This was because he had never dwelt upon the happiness of Heaven, or sought a fitness for its enjoyment. . . . Brethren, let us not fail now to make for ourselves friends, who we shall meet after death, in that blessed abode ! And then we shall have no cause—like this unhappy being, to fear that we shall know no one there.”

BOOK V.

PRIVATE LIFE OF M. VIANNEY.

CHAPTER I.

PORTRAIT OF M. VIANNEY.

WE have endeavoured to give the reader some idea of the extraordinary impression produced upon the pilgrims by the first appearance of M. Vianney ; although, in many respects, his outward person was little calculated to attract the attention of the vulgar.

The Curé d'Ars was small in stature ; his form was slender ; his complexion, while it indicated a certain vigour of constitution, conveyed at the same time the idea of a highly nervous nature.

Age, and his long and laborious career, had in no degree diminished his extraordinary activity of mind and body. It was still the same elastic step; the same quick and rapid movement; and still he retained in their full vigour all those faculties which had been so hardly and severely taxed during the whole of his ministerial life.

His hearing, his sight, and his memory, were as fresh and as acute as in the days of his youth; and although his frame was so attenuated that he hardly seemed to possess a material body, still his health was unimpaired, and his power of endurance so great, that in the minds of the admiring people it could only be accounted for by adding—as we have seen—yet another to the many miracles of Ars.

His long and angular face, which bore sad evidence to the unceasing fasts and mortifications to which he condemned himself, was slightly inclined upon his breast,

from the constant habit of prayer and adoration. His white hair fell in abundant locks around his venerable countenance, which, according to the statements before us, was expressive of an almost superhuman saintliness and piety.

It would, indeed, be difficult, except for those who fell under the spell of its influence, to give the reader an idea of the sentiments of reverence and admiration inspired by the mere aspect of this extraordinary man; and we therefore conclude this subject by transcribing a few passages from the portrait drawn by his friend and close observer, the Abbé Monnin.

“Upon this worn and emaciated face nothing earthly or human could be discovered; nothing could be there descried but the impress of divine grace which was stamped upon it. It was like the fragile and transparent covering of a spirit that no

longer belonged to this world. . . . The expression of the eye—that mirror of the soul—was in M. Vianney like a blaze of supernatural fire, which varied in light and intensity according to the subjects which he treated: dilating and sparkling with animation when he spoke of the love of God; veiled and shaded by tears when sin was the theme of his discourse. Alternately serene and profound, terrible and caressing, vivacious and grave, the Curé d'Ars possessed that mysterious and attractive power which the Saviour gives to those whose eyes are constantly turned towards him. And yet, remarkable fact! that look, which had power to penetrate every heart, and to scrutinise every conscience, never inspired other feelings than those of reverence and affection.

“It was easy to divine, from the sweet serenity of M. Vianney’s countenance, the

inward peace which he enjoyed ; and yet its natural and most familiar expression when in repose was that peculiar melancholy which results from the habitual contemplation of invisible things. The unceasing contact with so much sin, the perpetual aspect of so much suffering, augmented this tendency, and plunged him at times into the deepest dejection. Still the sad thoughts which often harassed his mind, and which were so vividly reflected upon his speaking face, at once gave way before the call of duty ; and when he came forth to address the people, or to resume his ministerial work, he presented himself, '*gracieusement orné de l'Esprit Saint*'—to use the words of an ancient Father of the Church—with a ready counsel and a glad smile for every one who addressed him."

An extraordinary likeness has been generally remarked to have existed between

M. Vianney and Voltaire. This likeness, however, is entirely confined to the form of the head and features. The physiognomy of these two remarkable individuals is said to have offered a contrast no less striking than their external resemblance.

CHAPTER II.

AMIALE QUALITIES OF M. VIANNEY.—HIS CHEERFULNESS AND VIVACITY.

“THE Curé d’Ars is good and saintly,” remarked one in the presence of a learned professor of philosophy, “but that is all.”

“That is not all,” replied the scholar; “he has knowledge, great knowledge. He manifests it in his conversations, upon every class of subject—upon God, upon the world, upon men, and upon things—upon the present and upon the past. Oh, how clear and beautiful is the vision of those who see everything in and through the Spirit of God! To what heights of wisdom and reason faith raises us!”

Although his life was so absorbed by the

duties of his ministry, the Curé d'Ars yet never listened with indifference to any of the political questions of the day, in which, whether directly or indirectly, the interests of religious and social order were concerned. We have already remarked upon the clearness of his judgments, and the extraordinary sagacity which he manifested in his decisions upon subjects of the most varied, and often complicated, character. A man distinguished for his talents and powers of discernment, after an interview with M. Vianney, writes: "We have been astonished at the *progressive* mind of your saint. How wonderful is the power of holiness. To what sublime heights can it raise the ideas of the lowliest and most humble of men!"

It may be thought that this man, so austere towards himself, whose whole life was an almost uninterrupted series of penances and mortifications: it may be

thought that not only would such a man take no part himself in any lively or sportive conversation, but that none such could be carried on in his presence: this, however, was very far from being the case. The Curé d'Ars possessed much natural vivacity of mind, and we imagine, also, a keen sense of the witty and humorous. When, in his short intervals of repose, he was in the society of those priests or lay friends whom he knew and loved, he could not only be gay and animated, but even mirthful; and though it has been said of him, that he was never known to laugh, still, his lively sallies and clever repartees, with his sweet and ready smile, often encouraged the merriment of others; and he never failed to bring into the little circle, of which he formed the centre, a sense of social enjoyment, loving sympathy, and intellectual life, which enabled his devoted brother labourers to forget all their toils, and, with renewed

cheerfulness and patient energy, to recommence their daily task.

M. Vianney was endowed with an acute sensibility. Events which would but slightly affect others, often told upon his sensitive heart with poignant and cruel severity. The death of his good and true friend Madlle. Ars—which occurred about this time—was a source of profound grief to him, and he never ceased to bear her in his memory with sentiments of the most tender veneration and regret.

When he made his first visit to the new inhabitants of the castle, he could not control an outburst of sorrow. “Poor demoiselle,” cried he, “oh, how grievous to see her no longer in the church. . . . *Dans son pauvre banc !*” . . . Then fearing that he had failed in delicacy towards the inheritors of his benefactress, he at once reproached himself for his tears and his sensibility, and added : “ And yet we ought

not to complain ; God has treated us as he did his chosen people. When he took Moses away from them, he left them Caleb and Joshua.”

A short time afterwards, when replying to their good wishes for the new year, he said to the same family, who were soon to take their place in his heart by the side of Madlle. Ars : “ Would that I were Saint-Peter, then would I give you the keys of Paradise.”

Upon whatever subject M. Vianney was called upon to give his opinion or advice, or however unexpected the appeal might be, he was never unprepared ; but without pause or delay, and in the simple language from which he never departed, at once came the prompt reply.

A man who pretended to great intellectual attainments declared to him one day, that there were things in religion in which he found it impossible to believe.

“What things?” said the Curé.

“Well, for example, eternal punishment.”

“My friend, I advise you never to speak upon the subject of religion until you have learned your catechism.”

“And what does the catechism say?”

“That it is necessary to believe the Gospel, because it is the word of the Lord. Do you believe the Gospel?”

“Yes, Monsieur le Curé.”

“Ah, well, the Gospel says, ‘Depart into everlasting fire.’ Are not these words sufficiently plain?”

On another occasion, a protestant gentleman requested an interview with the Curé d'Ars. At the close of their short communication, M. Vianney, still ignorant of the religious sentiments of his visitor, offered him a medal.

“M. the Curé,” said the stranger, as he took it from his hand, “you are giving a medal to a heretic, that is to say, to a

heretic from your point of view; but, notwithstanding the diversity of our creeds, I trust that we shall meet in heaven."

M. Vianney took his hand, and in a tone of tender compassion, replied, "Alas! my friend, those only can be united above whose union has commenced here below. Death will change nothing: where the tree falls there it will lie."

"M. the Curé, I commit myself to Jesus Christ, who has said 'He that believeth on me, hath everlasting life.'"

"But, my friend, Our Lord has also said '*If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen man.*' . . . He has said, there shall be one flock and one shepherd, and he has appointed Saint-Peter to be the head of that flock." . . . Vianney then disappeared, without waiting to hear what his adversary might have to say in reply.

Sometimes, a little innocent malice manifested itself in the piquant and ingenuous

replies which M. Vianney addressed to those who sought his counsel.

“Monsieur le Curé,” said a man, whose laughing countenance and robust frame offered a singular contrast with the pale face and attenuated form of him he addressed: “M. the Curé, I count a little upon you for my reception above; I hope you will not forget your old friends, but that you will allow them half the benefit of your fasts and your sacrifices. When you go up to Heaven, I shall try to catch hold of your cassock.”

“Oh, beware of that, my friend,” cried the Curé, glancing, at the same time, maliciously at the broad shoulders before him, “beware of that; the entrance to heaven is narrow, we should both be left at the door.”

“One of his parishioners, an excellent person, but more zealous than discreet, was one day indulging her propensity for giving

advice, at his expense, 'Monsieur the Curé,' said she, 'you were wrong in doing so; you should have acted in such a manner.' 'Enough,' said Vianney, gently, 'we are not yet in England,' alluding to the female rule permitted by the English constitution."

On his return from a drive, the Brother Athanase—Director of the School at Ars— informed M. Vianney that his horse had stumbled, and he had been thrown from his carriage into a ditch. The Curé offered his condolences, and then said, "My friend, Saint-Anthony never fell from his carriage; you must do like him." "What, then, did Saint-Anthony?" "He always went on foot."

Notwithstanding M. Vianney's decided taste for solitude, so intense was the gratification which he experienced in the society of his friends, so strong the yearning of his heart for human sympathy, that it seemed to be almost a necessity of his nature. "My

God, what happiness shall we not enjoy in Paradise, since even here the company of the saints is so delightful, their conversation so full of sweetness and consolation." This exclamation frequently escaped him during the evening hour, when the missionaries at Ars were successively admitted to his presence. These short intervals of social intercourse, with his visits to the sick, formed the only recreation of the Curé d'Ars. Since his visit to Dardilly, when recovering from a severe illness, he had never left his presbytery and church, nor had he ever swerved for one day or one hour from that course of life which has been laid before the reader, and with which he is sufficiently acquainted.

Nothing could exceed the thoughtful kindness and tender consideration which M. Vianney manifested towards all his brother-labourers and those favoured individuals who were admitted to his intimate friendship. The missionaries, one

and all, bear their affectionate testimony to the many marks, which they received from him, of his anxious care for their comfort and well-being, whilst at the same time his treatment of himself became more and more hard and severe.

The Abbé Toccanier writes, "One of the first Sundays that I had the happiness to pass with him, the good saint remarked that I coughed frequently during vespers. That night, what was my surprise to see the venerable Curé, his lantern in his hand, having braved the darkness of the night and the tempestuous weather to come to me. 'My friend,' said he, 'I observed that you coughed a great deal during vespers. I am not tired; I will take the early mass for you, and also the catechizing of the children.'"

Remarking on one occasion that, through inadvertence, the Superior of the missionaries had not provided himself with a cloak,

although the weather was severe, he immediately had one made for him.

“Another time,” the Abbe Monnin writes, “M. Vianney saw me cross the square at Ars, in a heavy rain; the same night I found an umbrella in my room. He had sent to Villefranche expressly to make this purchase.”

The kindness and courtesy manifested by the Curé d'Ars towards all who approached him was accompanied by the most entire absence of self-love; it seemed that he never knew how sufficiently to express his respect towards others or his humble estimate of himself. He never sat down in the presence of anyone, nor would he ever permit that any other should stand in his. “*Asseyez-vous, asseyez-vous,*” he continued to repeat, accompanying these words with an expressive gesture till he was obeyed.

His usual form in saluting his visitors was, “*Je vous présente bien mon respect.*”

In return for the respect which he was so ready to offer to all the world, he would accept of nothing in return; the very idea of being treated in a like manner himself offended him, and if anyone attempted it he would suddenly interrupt them by exclaiming, "Oh, I do not deserve your respect; a little affection is all I need."

Although M. Vianney lived in a day of extraordinary industrial progress, and of great intellectual, as well as political excitement, still the most startling novelties, the most surprising discoveries, passed unheeded by him; and it was difficult to elicit his attention, or to arouse his curiosity, except in those cases where he believed the interests of religion were in some manner involved.

Although, each day, multitudes of strangers were conveyed to Ars by the railway, M. Vianney died without ever having seen

a railway, or of having formed to himself any idea as to what a railway was like.

“ You speak of the railway, M. the Curé,” remarked a friend to him one day, “ do you know what it is ?”

“ No ; and I have no wish to know. *J'en parle parce que j'en entends parler.*”

CHAPTER III.

M. VIANNEY'S LIVELY FAITH, HIS CHARITY, AND
LIBERALITY.

BUT if M. Vianney remained nearly a stranger to the things which belong to the material world, he lived in the habitual contemplation of the unseen realities of religion, with so vivid and lively a faith, as to induce the popular belief at Ars, that in some mysterious manner they were sensibly revealed to him.

"The faith of M. the Curé is so strong," said Catherine, in her memoirs, "that he seems to see the things he speaks of."

"How blessed are the eyes," said he, "that see God. We have but a far-off

faith," he would add, "three hundred leagues from its object, just as if God were on the other side of the seas; if we had a lively penetrating faith like the saints, we should see God as they did; those who have no faith are far blinder than those who have no eyes.

"In this world we are in the midst of mist and fog; faith is the wind that dissipates the darkness around us, and brings the sunshine to our hearts."

We have alluded to dark moments when the terror of God's judgments seemed to take possession of poor M. Vianney's mind, and when the thought of death became terrible to him. We find, however, that as he advanced towards the close of his mortal career, he not only ceased to tremble at the thought of his departing hour, but that, on the contrary, he anticipated it with longing. He often spoke of writing a book on the "*délices de la mort*;" and his difficulty was

now no longer to resign himself to death ; it was rather to resign himself to his still protracted life.

In his catechisms, the Curé d'Ars often made use of familiar but graceful comparisons, in order to illustrate the aspiration of the Christian heart towards Heaven. He compared it to the swallow, which lightly touches but never rests upon the ground ; to the flame that always tends upwards ; to the balloon, that only waits for its cords to be cut in order to soar up on high.

“ The heart turns to what it loves best : the proud man seeks honours ; the miser seeks riches ; the vindictive man thinks of vengeance ; the sensual man of earthly pleasures : but the good Christian, of what does he think ? to which side does he turn ? To the side of Heaven—to his God, who is his chief treasure.

“ Saint-Augustine said, ‘ He who fears death cannot love God.’ If you had been

separated for long years from your earthly father, would you not be happy to see him again? Man was created for Heaven; the devil has broken the ladder which led thither. The Saviour, by His passion, has formed for us another. He has opened the door. The Holy Virgin is on the top of the ladder; she holds out her hands and calls to us. Oh, what an invitation! How glorious is the destiny of man—to see God—to love Him, to praise Him, and to worship Him throughout eternity.

“Saint-Colette sometimes went out of her cell, not able to restrain her joy at the thought of Heaven; she would walk about the corridors, crying out, ‘In Paradise! in Paradise!’

“A man who had been blind from his birth, having been conducted to the tomb of Saint-Martin, immediately recovered his sight. He was so struck with the beauties of nature, that he fainted with happiness.

With respect to the things of Heaven, we are like this blind man."

But if M. Vianney never lost sight of the future blessedness of the saved, it was with a no less vivid faith that he contemplated the terrible doom of the lost.

He seemed to see, as it were, the souls before him hovering between Heaven and Hell, and it was with deep and bitter anguish that he witnessed the thoughtlessness of the wavering, and the impenitence of the hardened. He was often heard to exclaim, with tears, "Oh, how sad to think that the souls which have cost so much to Our Lord should thus lose themselves."

A friend, one day, found him weeping alone over the sad condition of lost souls, and heard him exclaim, his eyes lifted up towards Heaven, "My God! is it possible that Thou hast endured so much to save souls, and yet that those souls should be the prey of the devil?"

“The world will never know,” said Catharine Lassagne, “to what penances, what extraordinary mortifications, M. the Curé condemns himself for poor sinners. One day he said to us, ‘I do not know whether it was really a voice that I heard, or whether it was a dream; I was, however, suddenly awakened by it. This voice admonished me that to wrest one soul from sin is more agreeable to God than multitudes of sacrifices. I was then meditating a further course of penance.’”

“You have prayed,” said M. Vianney to a curé who complained to him that he could not change the hearts of his parishioners—“you have prayed—you have wept—you have groaned—you have sighed—but have you fasted? Have you denied yourself rest? Have you performed penance? Till you have done all this, do not think that you have done enough.”

“Monsieur the Curé,” said one of his

missionaries to him one day, "if God proposed to you either to go up to Heaven at once, or to remain upon earth in order to labour for the conversion of sinners, what would you do?"

"I think that I should remain."

"Oh, Monsieur the Curé, is that possible? The saints are so happy in Heaven—no more temptations, no more suffering!"

Vianney replied with a smile, "That is true, my friend; the saints are *rentiers*; they have worked well—*puisque Dieu punit la paresse et ne récompense que le travail*—but they can no longer glorify God, as we may, by sacrifices for the salvation of souls."

"Would you, then, remain upon earth until the end of the world?"

"Just the same."

"In that case you would have plenty of time before you. Would you still rise so early?"

“Oh, yes, at midnight; I do not fear hardship. I should be the happiest man in the world, were it not for the thought that I must appear before the judgment-seat of God, with my *pauvre vie de Curé*.”

Next to his concern for the salvation of souls, the temporal wants of the poor appeared chiefly to occupy the mind of Vianney. We have already remarked that his charities were almost without limit; the love of giving, indeed, amounted almost to a passion with him. Catherine states that, in order to satisfy the need of his generous heart, to relieve distress wherever he witnessed it, he sold, one after another, nearly all his poor possessions to persons who paid him liberally for them. He sold his old shoes, old surplices, old cassocks, etc., for enormous prices. The singularity of his proceedings, in this respect, sometimes provoked the smile of his brother-priests; but, on such occasions, he would suddenly cut

short their raillery, by saying, "What does it signify, if, after all, I obtain money for my poor?" Except for the adroit interference of the devoted Catherine, he would very soon have sold all his wardrobe, the sheets from his bed had already shared the fate of his chairs and table.

One day, M. Vianney, on coming out of his Providence, met a poor man, who had walked far, and whose bare feet were cut and bleeding. The Curé immediately took off his own shoes and gave them to him.

Another day, when a beggar approached him, finding nothing in his pocket but his handkerchief, he immediately presented it to him, excusing himself, at the same time, that he was not able to do more.

After this, in order not to be unprepared for any sudden appeal, he always carried about with him a certain sum of money, which he dispensed indiscriminately to all applicants, till it was exhausted.

“How happy are we that the poor come to us,” said he; “if they did not seek us, we should have to seek them, and we have not always time.” When a poor man knocked at his door, he always went to him himself, and he never failed to add to his material aid some kind and encouraging words.

He often said, “There are those who perform alms only to be seen and admired by men. . . . They sometimes complain that they do not meet with sufficient gratitude. . . . If you do your alms, in order to please the world, you have, indeed, reason to complain; but, if your motive is to please God, what does it signify whether or not you meet with gratitude on the part of men. Our duty is to do all the good we can to everyone around us, and to look for our recompense from God alone.

“There are others who say, ‘Oh! this poor man makes a bad use of the alms which

he received.' Be it so! That poor man will be judged by the use which he will have made of your alms; but you will be judged by the alms which you might have done, and which you have failed to do."

A robber, who had managed to penetrate into the presbytery, found in a drawer some pewter spoons and forks, which he appropriated; and he was busily occupied, satisfying his hunger with the bread of the orphans, in the Providence, when M. Vianney surprised him: "What are you doing there, my friend?" "I am hungry, M. the Curé." After having bestowed alms upon his unceremonious visitor with a liberal hand, the Curé, who recognized the "*argenterie*" in his hands, exclaimed, "Save yourself, my friend!—save yourself quickly, lest they should arrest you!"

He went himself to warn a woman, who had robbed him of nine hundred francs, that the *gendarmes* were in quest of her.

He gave a pension to another, in order to allure her back from a life of dishonesty.

This poor priest who, to use his own words, possessed nothing but his *pauvres péchés*, enriched the whole neighbourhood around him by his liberalities. Silver and gold came to him from France, from Belgium, from England, and from Germany; and he had only to form the wish, in order to receive immediately the supply of money necessary for the forwarding of any work or institution in which he was interested.

“It is sufficient,” affirms Catherine, “for him to form the wish; he has saints in Paradise, whom he calls his *consuls*; he invokes them, and immediately the money pours in.”

Among the pilgrims who came to Ars, there were many whose wealth and position enabled them largely to contribute to the accomplishment of his benevolent designs; and thus the country far around was covered

with charitable and religious institutions, of which he, as it were, had laid the first stone.

It was in the course of the year 1848, that the Curé d'Ars established and endowed a school for the gratuitous education of the boys in his parish. This establishment, which continues to prosper, he placed under the direction of the Brothers of the *Sainte-Famille* of Belley.

No matter what sums were deposited in the hands of M. Vianney—he literally received only to give away—it was his habit twice a day to dispense all the money that he had in his possession.

Such indeed was his tendency to despoil himself of everything, that he was obliged to take precautions against himself, in order that he might not be left unprovided with money for his masses. For a long time he deposited a certain sum in charge of a widow, who possessed his confidence.

“Claudine,” said he, “I entrust you with this money; keep it carefully, but, above all, beware of the Curé d’Ars, and if he asks you for any of it, refuse him at once.”

A priest who was building a church, but who was short of funds, said to him one day, “M. the Curé, teach me your secret in order that I may not be stopped half-way in the erection of my poor church.”

“My friend,” replied the Curé, “my secret is very simple: *tout donner et ne rien garder.*”

CHAPTER IV.

HUMILITY OF VIANNEY.—HIS INCREASING SELF-DENIAL.

ACCORDING to M. Vianney's own statement, his natural character was irascible and impatient, and it was not without much painful effort, that he had attained the unvarying gentleness and meekness of spirit, for which he was so remarkable. If it were so, then indeed his attainments were wonderful. His humility was so profound, his spirit of self-renunciation so complete, that it would seem his bitterest foe would have found it hard to discover a vulnerable point, whereat to aim his shaft. Indeed, his opinion of himself was so lowly, that he believed that all the world had a right to despise him ;

and it is affirmed that he even entertained a special tenderness towards those who cruelly criticised or blamed him, or who otherwise treated him unkindly.

But while M. Vianney was so insensible to blame—except indeed, that he welcomed it gladly as his desert—it was far otherwise as regarded praise. On this point he was so susceptible, that his friends were in constant fear and dread, lest, by some unguarded word or expression, they should wound his humility. Bishop Devie, one day, so far forgot himself, as to say to him, “*Mon Saint Curé.*” These words appeared to occasion him severe pain. “Oh, how unhappy am I,” cried he, “that even my Lord Bishop should be deceived in me.”

One day his brother priests were remarking how difficult it must be for those who are the objects of universal praise and adulation to maintain a humble frame of mind.

M. Vianney at once perceived their meaning, and lifting up his eyes with an expression of profound melancholy, he exclaimed: "Oh, my friends, if only I could be kept from despair."

"I have received two letters by this day's post," said he, one day; "in one, they pretended that I was a great saint: in the other, that I was a hypocrite and a charlatan. The first added nothing to me; the second took nothing from me. We are what we appear before God, *et puis pas plus*. . . . God has chosen me to be the minister of His grace to sinners, because I am the most ignorant and miserable of men; if there had been a more contemptible priest in the parish than myself, he would have been preferred before me."

In the mind of Vianney, humility constituted the first and chief Christian virtue; that one, indeed, without which, he deemed every other impossible.

“ M. the Curé, what should a man do in order to become a true Christian?” one asked of him.

“ My friend, he must learn to love God.”

“ And how to attain to this love of God?”

“ Ah! my friend, humility! humility! It is our pride which prevents our becoming saints; pride is the chain of the chaplet of all the vices; humility, the chain of the chaplet of all the virtues.”

“ Alas! it is difficult to conceive how so poor a thing as humanity can be tempted to pride. The devil one day appeared to Saint-Macaire, armed with a rod, as though he were prepared to attack him, and thus addressed him: ‘ All that thou doest, I do also; thou fastest, I do not eat; thou watchest, I never sleep. There is but one thing which thou doest and which I cannot do.’ ‘ Eh! and what is that?’ ‘ Humble myself,’ replied the devil, and he disappeared. . . .

“ Ah, my friend, there are saints who put the devil to flight by simply saying, ‘ *Que je suis misérable.*’ ”

But it was, at least, as much by his example as by his teaching, that this remarkable man attained that empire over the hearts and minds of his countrymen, and brethren in the Romish Church, which he so long exercised. His imperturbable kindness and gentleness under the most trying provocations, his modest and simple deportment, in the midst of the acclamations of the admiring crowds, which never ceased to throng his footsteps, made a more vivid and lasting impression than any words could have done. Self-love, indeed, seemed to be so utterly crushed in him, that no personal offence or vexation had power for one moment to ruffle his serene and tranquil patience. On one occasion, when one of the pilgrims had, by her obstinate persistence, needlessly harassed and fatigued M. Vian-

ney, a stranger, who was present, unable to restrain his indignation, rushed out of the church, exclaiming, "*Je suis en colère pour M. le Curé, qui ne l'est pas.*"

In the luxurious and too-forgetful age in which the Curé d'Ars lived, he became more and more convinced, that every, even the smallest indulgence in material comfort must prove inimical to the growth of grace in the soul, and each day he sought to render himself more and more independent of what are commonly accounted the very necessities of life ; he hardly ate, he hardly slept, he wished for nothing, he required nothing, it was almost as if he had no body ; the hearth of his kitchen had never seen a fire, his bed-chamber was the only room in the presbytery which bore evidence of a human tenant, and the furniture of that poor chamber, lit by two windows, without curtains, was not his own ; it had been many times sold and re-purchased. The

image of the Saviour, with the portraits of a few of His best-beloved saints, and a likeness of the Bishop of Belley, hung upon the dilapidated walls; opposite the door was a shelf, charged with old books; and on the other side, an antique chest, the drawers of which contained his provision of crosses and medals; in the middle, was a little oak wood table.

Although money never ceased to pour in upon M. Vianney, he set little value upon it, and, except as a possible instrument of good, he was utterly regardless of it. Speaking one day of a considerable sum, which he had sacrificed with his usual readiness, he said, "It would be well if they would use it to polish souls; but they will polish only stones with it."

One day, by a mistake, he lit his candle with a bank note, and when his friends expressed their regret, "Oh!" cried he,

“I have done less harm than if I had committed the smallest venal sin.”

“This morning,” said he, on another occasion, to the Abbé Monnin, “a great lady, who had a great deal more than a hundred francs on her fingers, approached me with these words: ‘M. the Curé, some time since I gave you a hundred francs, in order that you might obtain my cure. I am not cured; give me back my money.’”

“And you returned it to her?”

“Certainly. Fortunately I had just before received a hundred francs in gold pieces, and I immediately went in search of them.”

“And you made no remark upon the conduct of this ‘great lady’?”

“On no account would I have done so.”

“But she is a thief?”

“No; it was true, she had given me a hundred francs; I remember it perfectly.”

M. Vianney was disinterested even with respect to the benevolent institutions which he undertook. A kind lady once offered to share the expenses of some of his charitable enterprises.

“I do not wish for your money,” said he, “you will easily find an investment for it; you have enough to do at home.”

Poor Catherine once flattered herself that she had done a good deed by replacing an old clay porringer, which had long been in the service of M. Vianney, by a cup of less coarse material. He would, however, by no means accept of this luxury, but got rid of it as quickly as possible, saying, “*On ne pourra donc pas venir à bout d'avoir la pauvreté dans son ménage.*”

This was one of the last occurrences of his life.

CHAPTER V.

DECLINING HEALTH OF VIANNEY.—HIS CONTINUED AND
FRIGHTFUL AUSTERITIES.

THE Curé d'Ars had now reached his seventieth year: yet, so far from yielding to the claims of his advancing age and increasing weakness, it appears that up to this time he became, if possible, only more and more severe in his treatment of himself. The short nights of only three or four hours, which succeeded his long day's work, were now generally passed in pain and weariness. He often confessed that he never enjoyed one hour of tranquil sleep; he was consumed by fever, upon his miserable pallet. A cough, to which he had been more or less subject for five-and-twenty years, now

assumed a graver form and hardly ceased to harass him. Frequently he rose every quarter of an hour from his bed, in hopes of finding some alleviation of his pain ; and when at length, from utter prostration, his restlessness abated, and he felt that he could have slept, it was the hour when this poor devoted man, by an effort which no one to look at him would have believed possible, but which was renewed every night, tore himself from the rest which he had not yet tasted, and resumed with apparent cheerfulness his long and toilsome course of labour.

At this time he was so feeble—so suffering, that when he arose from his bed, he was unable to stand without support, and he often fell down on his way from his chamber to the church ; yet still he persevered, and when he reached the confessional he appeared for a time to triumph over his weakness.

Notwithstanding, however, the state of exhaustion to which the Curé d'Ars was now reduced, he still exercised such an extraordinary command over himself, that it was only in extreme moments, and when his sufferings were very acute, that his actual condition was betrayed to his friends.

One day, M. Charles de Montbriant, on his return to the neighbourhood, after a long absence, came expressly to Ars to inquire for the health of the Curé; he knocked at the confessional; M. Vianney immediately appeared, and followed him to the sacristy. "M. the Curé, my family are anxious to know how you are?"

"Another time, M. the Count, I beg you will not trouble yourself for so insignificant a cause." He then saluted him respectfully, and disappeared without another word.

We have seen that M. Vianney manifested, from his earliest childhood, an extra-

ordinary and, as it appears to us, an instinctive tendency towards a life of asceticism; this tendency had increased with his advancing years, till at length penances and mortifications possessed for him a charm and attraction such as it would be difficult for other natures even to comprehend. "In this way," said he, "it is only the first step which costs; there is in mortification a sweetness and a consolation which, when once tasted, it is impossible again to dispense with: you must exhaust the cup to the bottom. . . . There is only one way of giving one's self to God," added he, "it is to give one's self utterly, and without a shadow of reservation; what we keep back serves only to embarrass and trouble us."

The spirit of self-denial had indeed become so natural to the Curé d'Ars, that in his case the exception to the rule of his life would have been to allow himself the

most trifling indulgence. He would not gratify himself by smelling a flower.

Often he abstained from drinking when suffering from intense thirst; he never permitted himself the least support when on his knees.

M. Vianney was painfully sensible to cold, but he would use no means to protect himself from it; during a very severe winter, one of the Missionaries, pained at witnessing his suffering, secretly devised a way, by means of a trap-door, of having hot water conveyed under the confessional; the *ruse* succeeded perfectly. "God is very good," said poor Vianney; "this year, though it is so cold, my feet are always warm."

The effort of another friend was less fortunate in its result. Discovering that M. Vianney often suffered acutely, in consequence of the long hours passed in the same position, and with no other support

than the hard walls of the confessional, he had a lining inserted within of a more pliable material. No sooner, however, did the obstinate ascetic perceive the provision made for his comfort than he at once and indignantly tore it all away.

In fact, the more Vianney tortured himself by these cruel privations, so much the more earnestly did he strive to discover new modes of suffering.

We have before us extracts from a letter written in 1840, containing these words: "The spectacle of the sufferings of our *saint Curé* is heartrending. It is impossible to see and to hear him without feelings of the deepest pity, mingled with admiration at this sublime and perpetual sacrifice. It is always with the same zeal, the same resignation, the same sweet and gentle deportment, that he endures the constant pressure of the ever-increasing crowds who come to obtain from him a last word, or to

seek a last blessing." A miracle only can explain this inconceivable existence. The throng was never more prodigious; men in masses surround his confessional. The church is crowded day and night."

Perceiving one day that the Curé coughed frequently during the service, the Countess des Garets sent him a phial of syrup." "What is that," said Vianney, to the bearer; "take it back quickly to *Madame*, thank her heartily for her kindness, but tell her if she would say a *pater* and an *ave* for her poor Curé, it would be better."

During his convalescence, his friends persisted in sending him similar remedies. "Carry these things," said he, "to Mother Gonot"—a poor woman in the parish—"she needs them more than I."

On finding that, by an order from the château, a mattress and bolster had been placed upon his bed, he displayed so much vexation, as he indignantly cast aside these

superfluities and precipitated them into the middle of the room, that the person who had been commissioned to be the bearer of them, dared not again appear before him till he summoned her to his presence, and humbly entreated her pardon for his *brusquerie*.

There must, it appears, have been an extraordinary elasticity in the constitution of the Curé d'Ars. The crowd, the heat, the human pressure, the stifling atmosphere which surrounded him; everything, in short, that would have annihilated the strength of any other man, appeared to be the very means by which he rallied his. If, at the end of a day of overwhelming fatigue, he was summoned to visit some poor invalid—no matter at what distance—he would again set out on his weary way; and never relax in his painful effort, till his pastoral duty was accomplished.

To his vigils and fastings, and those mor-

tifications which we have noticed, M. Vianney added many other austerities. Sometimes he slept in the cellar, upon a handful of straw—lay down, we should say—for sleep could hardly have visited him in such a situation.

His faithful and devoted attendants Jeanne-Marie Chaney, and Catherine Laspagne testify to having found in the chamber of M. Vianney, divers instruments of penance, hair-shirts, sackcloth, knotted cords terminated by an iron ball, chains of steel, &c. They also discovered in the same secret recess, four or five *disciplines* of iron, the branches of which were armed with knobs of lead.

It is affirmed that the Curé d'Ars was obliged frequently to renew these instruments of torture, in consequence of their being broken by the force with which he flagellated himself.

“I do not know in what year it occur-

red," relates a grave witness, "but some time since the Curé d'Ars ordered from the farrier of the village a chain of such dimensions as to make the initiated, who knew for what purpose it was intended, tremble."

Bishop Devie often endeavoured to persuade M. Vianney to modify the severity of his fasts, and, especially, he insisted that the days of his periodical visits to himself should be days of relaxation to the *saint pénitent*. On one occasion he placed him by his side at table, and by his kind and pressing hospitality induced him to eat almost like any other mortal; a few hours afterwards, however, the Bishop learned, to his consternation, that his paternal solicitude had been the occasion of much suffering to him who had been the object of it; and, with the kindness which is said to have marked his every action, he turned to his Curé, and said, "Fast in peace, my

friend: henceforward I will never again force you to dine with me."

From that time it was always the Bishop who came to visit Vianney at the presbytery, and his successors also continued to show him the same mark of regard and respect.

We learn that at a later period than that of which this chapter treats, and during the closing days of his mortified life, the Curé d'Ars did, in a measure, modify the severity of his treatment of himself. "*C'est*," writes the Abbe Monnin, after stating this fact, "*C'est que cet esprit si ferme et si droit avait compris que les infirmités et les maux qui viennent de l'age sont des pénitences continuelles que Dieu nous réserve, et qu'il choisit infiniment mieux que nous ne le ferions nous-mêmes.*"

CHAPTER VI.

DEATH OF THE CURÉ D'ARS.

THE life of the Curé d'Ars was now rapidly drawing to a close. For a long time he had been reduced to a state of such extreme weakness that his voice was scarcely audible, and only an attentive ear could distinguish the faint sounds which fell from his lips.

The great heat of July, 1859, had cruelly tried the aged priest. It was impossible to enter the crowded church of Ars without being almost suffocated. The want of air, occasioned by the dense congregation by which it was thronged day and night, rendered it like a heated furnace; and those who waited their time to enter the con-

fessional, were constantly obliged to rush out in order to obtain a moment's relief in a less insupportable atmosphere.

M. Vianney, however, never quitted his suffering post, never even attempted to abridge the length of those mortal *séances* which lasted in the morning from one o'clock till eleven, in the evening from one till eight. Still there was a limit even to his powers of endurance, and he was now sinking under the weight of this long and cruel martyrdom. His continued life, however, had so long been regarded as a miracle, and he had taken so much pains to conceal, as far as possible, his real condition, that no one, as yet, apprehended his approaching end. It was only remarked that, when in the middle of the night he rose from his bed in order to return to his *chers pécheurs*, he frequently fell down from weakness in his chamber, and also that he was subject to frequent fits of fainting.

Still he continued to make light of his suffering, and when his friends remarked with concern that the cough to which he had long been subject was more frequent and more harassing, he replied, with a smile, "*C'est ennuyeux ! ça me prend tout mon temps.*"

It was in vain that Vianney's devoted attendants entreated him to spare himself, and to take more rest. He always replied, "*Je me reposerai en Paradis.*"

On Friday, the 29th of July, he went through his usual course of labour. He performed his catechism, passed sixteen or seventeen hours at the confessional, and finished this hard day's work with the usual evening prayers ; but, on entering the presbytery that night, he sunk into a chair, saying, "*Je n'en peux plus.*" When the missionaries, however, left him at a later hour, he retired to rest as usual, and it does not appear that any imminent or immediate

danger was apprehended. At one o'clock in the morning he attempted to rise up in order to return to his church, but, finding his weakness insurmountable, he called for help.

“ You are fatigued, Monsieur the Curé ? ”

“ Yes, I believe it is my *pauvre fin*. ”

It was the habit of Vianney, when speaking of himself, constantly to make use of the word “ *pauvre*. ” It was always his “ *pauvre âme*, ” his “ *pauvre péchés*, ” etc.

“ I will go and seek aid. ”

“ No, do not disturb anyone, it is not worth while. ”

When the day dawned, Vianney made no further attempt to contend against his increasing weakness—he even condescended to receive those cares and attentions which he had hitherto disdained ; he would not, however, consent to a fan being used to give him a little air and to chase away the flies ; that appeared to him too great a luxury.

“You suffer much,” said one to him; a resigned movement of his head was his affirmative reply.

“Monsieur le Curé, let us hope that Saint-Philomène, whose interest we are going to invoke with all our strength, will cure you this time, as she did eighteen years ago.” “*Oh, Saint-Philomène n’y pourra rien.*”

The dismay of the congregation when, on the following morning, Vianney did not appear at the door of the confessional, as usual, may be imagined, as also the profound grief which spread over the parish as the news of his dangerous condition was communicated from house to house.

Apart from Vianney’s great reputation, and the universal veneration in which he was held by his brethren in the Roman Catholic Church, it appears that he was the object of the strongest and most devoted individual attachments, and this not in a

few and rare cases, but in numerous and countless instances.

The *Frères* who presided over the college which he had instituted at Ars loved him with a warmth and spontaneity of affection which some may deem the ascetic priest little calculated to inspire, and it was their constant endeavour, by a thousand ingenious contrivances, to lighten as far as possible the toil of his laborious life.

Many strangers who were drawn to Ars by the fame of the Curé, and with the intention of remaining there only a few days for their own edification, found themselves so spell-bound by the charm of his presence, that henceforth they had no other wish or desire than to follow his footsteps, and ever looking out for opportunities of serving him. They might be seen, now protecting him from the importunate crowd, now keeping order amongst the excited people, and endeavouring always with untiring vigi-

lance, to render his hard life more supportable.

The missionaries stationed at Ars were, as has already been noted, like sons and brothers to Vianney; and thus this poor priest, who through life had shrunk from every human enjoyment, yet found himself on his dying bed the object of the most devoted care and affection, and in the midst of true and loving friends; amongst these was his old and steadfast ally and supporter the Count des Garets, Mayor of Ars, who never left his bedside. Another kind friend might be seen mounting to the roof of the presbytery under a scorching August sun, in order to water the exterior of the house, and thus to maintain a cool and refreshing atmosphere around the dying priest.

For three days every means which the most devoted affection and the most ingenious piety could devise, were employed to

propitiate Heaven in his favour ; vows were made to all the saints in Paradise ; deputations were sent to all the religious communities in the country ; pilgrimages were made to all the shrines ; but still it became more and more evident that the hours of the Curé d'Ars were numbered, and that the last solemn messenger was rapidly approaching.

On Tuesday evening, M. Vianney requested to have the last sacraments administered to him. During the ceremony he appeared to be much affected, and was seen to shed many tears. Before it commenced, one who enjoyed the privilege of a long and trusted friendship approached him, and with clasped hands entreated him to pray the Lord to prolong his days. Vianney, fixing his earnest eyes upon her, silently intimated that he could not yield to her solicitation. A few hours later, his Bishop, Monseigneur de Langalerie, who had been

apprised of the imminent danger of Vianney, arrived in haste, out of breath, and praying aloud as he forced his difficult way through the kneeling crowds which obstructed his passage. He was in time, but only in time for one last interview with his Curé. Poor Vianney's dying eye again gleamed for a moment with all its former brilliancy, as with tears of joy he welcomed his beloved bishop.

At two o'clock the following morning Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney breathed his last; whilst the Abbé Monnin, who had been commissioned to recite the prayers for the dying, uttered these words: "*Veniant illi obviam Sancti Angeli Dei; et perducant eum in civitatem cælestem Jerusalem.*"

To all appearance Vianney's end was peace, although he manifested nothing of that rapturous bliss, those holy transports, by which many of his Roman Catholic brethren expected to be edified at the

closing scene of his marvellous career. Still, though conscious to the last, he not only anticipated the moment of his departure without any of that dread which had formerly harassed his mind at the thought of death, but he awaited it with an assured and steadfast hope of an everlasting union with his Lord and Master.*

* “*Cette fin n’a pas eu d’autre caractère que son étonnante simplicité. Le serviteur de Dieu a voulu être modeste dans sa mort comme il l’avait été dans sa vie. Beaucoup s’attendaient à voir se manifester, à cette heure suprême, ces transports d’amour, ces ravissements, ces accents enflammés et ces saintes larmes, dont la source était devenue de jour en jour plus abondante ; main rien de tout cela ! . . . On eût dit qu’il voulait continuer à se cacher, à s’envelopper le plus possible d’ombre et de silence. Il a eu la mort qu’il aurait préférée s’il avait eu la liberté du choix.*”—
M. MONNIN.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FUNERAL OF THE CURÉ D'ARS.

It would be vain to attempt to describe the grief and consternation of the people of Ars, when the sad tidings that their beloved Curé had breathed his last was spread through the parish. The crowds who had continued to the last moment to offer up their prayers in the church, the families who had watched in their homes with wakeful anxiety throughout the night, now flocked towards the presbytery. They would not believe in the heavy calamity which had fallen upon them. They had reckoned on a miracle, and felt convinced that one would be accomplished in their favour.

M. Vianney had lived for nearly forty years a life which would have destroyed any other mortal. Surely, they persuaded themselves, this exceptional life would yet be preserved. That Ars could exist without its *saint Curé*—its ever open and ever-crowded church—its thronged confessional, appeared to them an impossibility, and on first receiving the news of their beloved pastor's death, a feeling of incredulity mingled with the despair which penetrated every heart.

The sight of the presbytery, however, the cries of grief which were heard on all sides, above all the knell of the church bells, but too soon dissipated their momentary illusion.

The burial of the Curé d'Ars took place on the Saturday which followed his death. On the arrival of the Bishop at an early hour in the morning, the funeral procession was formed. The multitude assembled on

this occasion was enormous ; the strangers are said on the lowest computation to have amounted to 6,000 ; more than 300 priests were present, though many were prevented attending from the circumstance of the interment taking place on a Saturday ; and nearly all the convents in the country sent their representatives.

The pall-bearers on this occasion were Vianney's friends and admirers : M. the Curé of Trévoux, Canon of the Cathedral of Belley ; M. the Count des Garets, Mayor of Ars ; and the Préfet of the district. The chief mourners were the Missionaries of Pont d'Ain, whom Vianney had regarded as his spiritual family ; and his relatives from Dardilly. During the first arrangements for this sad ceremony the utmost quiet prevailed ; women and children of the parish, brotherhoods, members of religious communities, regular and secular clergy, were ranged in two lines in the

most perfect order, but when the coffin which contained the remains of the lamented priest became visible at the door of the presbytery, one cry of irrepressible grief burst forth, and it was no longer possible to control the feelings of the excited people. When the immense convoy, which is said to have resembled rather the triumphant march of an emperor or prince, than the funeral procession of a humble individual, reached the church, the Bishop of Belley stopped, and facing the coffin, he delivered the discourse which is affixed to the end of this chapter. He chose for his text, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The funeral oration was followed by the mass; after the absolution the body of the Curé d'Ars was conveyed to the chapel of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, and placed by the confessional where he had passed so large a portion of his life.

DISCOURS

DE MONSEIGNEUR L'ÉVÊQUE DE BELLEY, PRONONCÉ
DEVANT LE CERCUEIL DE M. JEAN-BAPTISTE-MARIE
VIANNEY, LE VÉNÉRABLE ET SAINT CURÉ D'ARS,
LE JOUR DE SES FUNÉRAILLES, 6 AOUT 1859.

“Euge! serve bone et fidelis, intra in gaudium Domini tui.”—MATTHEW XXV. 21.

Faites silence, mes frères ! Ecoutez bien, pieux fidèles que le respect, l'affection et la douleur ont amenés si nombreux à cette imposante cérémonie. Je vais la répéter cette parole de notre Seigneur dans le saint Evangile : dites, en est-il un seul parmi vous qui ne croie l'entendre sortir de la bouche de Dieu lui-même, au moment où la belle âme de notre saint Curé s'est détachée enfin de son corps usé si longtemps au service du divin Maître ? *“Euge! serve bone et fidelis intra in gaudium Domini*

tui.” Courage! bon et fidèle serviteur, entrez dans la joie de votre Seigneur et de votre Dieu.

Méditons là quelques instants, mes frères, cette parole si douce et si chère. Elle doit faire en ce moment notre espérance, notre consolation. J’ajoute qu’elle renferme un salutaire avertissement, au nom de celui qui ne doit plus vous parler désormais que par les exemples de sa vie, et probablement aussi par les merveilles de sa tombe.

“*Euge!*” Courage! Déjà ce premier mot, ce seul mot nous relève: “Courage! bon et fidèle serviteur!” Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney, notre saint Curé d’Ars, est un serviteur de Dieu qui a compté soixante-quatorze ans de bons et loyaux services; sa vie tout entière a été la durée de ses saints engagements. Tout petit enfant il servit Dieu; jeune homme il servit Dieu; étudiant ecclésiastique, il servit Dieu; les refus ne le découragèrent pas

dans ses projets de servir Dieu d'une manière plus absolue et plus fructueuse en embrassant la carrière sacerdotale ; il ne voulait être prêtre que pour servir Dieu. Il l'a bien prouvé ! Prêtre, vicaire, curé, il servit Dieu toujours.

Ce service, vous le savez tous, a fini par remplir tellement sa vie, que les actions indifférentes dont nous faisons, nous, la consécration au service de Dieu en les lui offrant et les rapportant ainsi indirectement à sa gloire, avaient comme disparu de la vie du saint Curé. Il ne mangeait pas, il ne dormait pas ; cette locution familière avait presque sa réalisation pour le Curé d'Ars. Trois ou quatre onces de nourriture par jour, une heure, deux heures de sommeil lui suffisaient. Et le reste du temps, et sa journée, qu'en faisait-il ? Tout entière au service de Dieu, dans le service des âmes : quatorze, seize, dix-huit heures de confessionnal suivant les jours : exercice de

la confession interrompu par ce catéchisme qui était une si éloquente prédication. Même lorsqu'on ne l'entendait pas, lorsqu'on ne comprenait pas, sa vue en chaire, sa vue toute seule prêchait, touchait, convertissait. Et le reste du temps que faisait-il encore ? Des rapports fréquents avec ses paroissiens bien-aimés, la visite des malades, la prière, et de longues prières, les pieuses lectures . . . en un mot, le jour tout entier se passait dans des actes employés directement à la gloire et au service de Dieu. Et ce jour tout entier à Dieu recommençait sans cesse, et le dimanche, et la semaine, et le jour, et la nuit sans trêve ni vacance. “ *Euge ! serve bone et fidelis, quia in pauca fuisti fidelis !* Courage ! bon et fidèle serviteur, vous avez été fidèle en de petites choses ! ” O, mon Dieu, vous me permettez bien cette parole : ce n'est pas en de petites choses que le Curé d'Ars fut serviteur fidèle et dévoué ! il faut le

dire à votre gloire, ô mon Dieu ; car cette vie a été une merveille de votre puissance et de votre amour : pour vous, oui, sans doute, tout cela est peu de chose, infiniment peu de chose, mais pour nous hommes, pour nous faibles mortels, cette vie du Curé d'Ars est une merveille, et, on peut le dire, un continuel miracle. Combien y a-t-il d'années, combien y a-t-il de siècles, peut-être qu'on ne vit pas une existence sacerdotale dans des conditions semblables aussi fructueusement, aussi saintement, aussi continuellement occupée, employée, dépensée au service de Dieu.

Et ce service de Dieu a été accompli avec toutes les conditions de bonté et de fidélité que réclame la sainteté du Maître que nous servons. “*Euge ! serve bone et fidelis !*” Courage ! serviteur bon et fidèle. Le bon pour un chrétien, pour un prêtre, c'est le sacrifice, la croix, la mortification. Le bon c'est le gémissement de la nature changé

en soupir d'expiation et d'amour. Le sacrifice est un acte d'amour et en même temps la véritable épreuve du véritable amour. Voilà ce qui fait le *bon* service, le service à toute épreuve : notre saint Curé d'Ars a eu cette solide et forte *bonté*.

A l'austérité d'une vie telle que nous l'avons ébauchée et que vous l'avez tous connue, il ajoutait encore de nombreuses mortifications ; il avait à supporter des souffrances presque continuelles, et Dieu lui imposait, par moment, le poids de peines secrètes et mystérieuses.

Et ce service si pénible et si *bon* fut tellement *fidèle* ; la fidélité de ce serviteur fut si entière, que l'amour-propre n'en détournait jamais la moindre part, ce qu'il faisait pour Dieu le saint prêtre le laissait tout à Dieu ; ce pauvre Curé de campagne entouré de ses milliers de pèlerins était simple comme un enfant. Vous l'avez vu vous tous ici présents. Vous l'avez en-

tendu : n'est-ce pas la vérité, la plus exacte vérité ? Les témoignages les plus variés et les plus multipliés du respect et de l'admiration ne semblaient en rien l'émouvoir ; il bénissait la foule comme s'il eut reçu lui-même la bénédiction de plus haut que lui. Il voyait son image reproduite partout et de toutes les manières, comme celle du patron, du saint de l'endroit, et il disait souvent, à cette occasion, un mot trivial et vulgaire que sa simplicité rendait sublime—

“ *Euge ! serve bone et fidelis !* Courage ! serviteur bon et fidèle.” Ces mots sont si vrais en parlant de vous. Courage ! mais non, je ne le dis pas pour vous, je le dis pour nous. Courage ! *ne pleurons point comme ceux qui n'ont point d'espérance.* Ah ! l'espérance est ici presque de la foi ! Permettez-nous en ce moment, mes frères, de vous ouvrir plus intimement le fond de notre cœur.

Providentiellement averti du rapide pro-

grès de la maladie de notre cher et vénéré Curé d'Ars nous nous somme hâté d'accourir ; nous récitons nos prières pendant le voyage ; c'était l'office de Saint-Dominique, *un autre bon et fidèle serviteur*. (1 Thess. iv. 12.) Comme malgré nous, les paroles de la prière nous rappelaient sans cesse le souvenir du saint prêtre que nous venions visiter. En union avec Jésus-Christ, chef de l'Eglise, nous aimons à penser en disant le bréviaire au saint dont nous célébrons la fête. Saint-Dominique était avec nous de moitié dans nos prières ; mais à tout instant nous voyions apparaître aussi dans notre esprit le bon et saint Curé d'Ars. Nous disions, par exemple : “ *Domine quis habitabit*, etc. Seigneur qui demeurera dans votre tabernacle ou qui reposera sur votre sainte montagne ? Celui qui vit sans tache et qui pratique la justice.” Ces paroles lui allaient si bien ! et ces autres : *Domine, Dominus noster*. “ Seigneur notre Dieu, que

votre nom est adorable dans toute la terre !

. . . . Qu'est-ce que l'homme, pour que vous vous souveniez de lui ? Vous l'avez placé un peu au-dessous des anges : vous l'avez couronné de gloire et d'honneur."

. . . . Et mille autres paroles qui, dans leur application au serviteur de Dieu, nous touchaient, nous attendrissaient.

Et, quelques heures après la mort du saint prêtre, en disant la messe pour lui, à l'autel où il était monté si souvent lui-même, les pensées de la veille nous revenaient à l'esprit en lisant ces paroles qui suivent l'épître : *Emitte lucem tuam*, "c'est votre lumière et votre vérité qui m'ont conduit jusqu'à votre montagne sainte et à vos divins tabernacles. O, mon âme, pourquoi donc êtes-vous triste et pourquoi me troublez-vous ?" Et ces autres de l'Evangile, *Levate oculos vestros*, "Levez vos yeux, voyez ces regions. Elles sont toutes blanchies des moissons qui les recouvrent."

Ces regions, c'était, pour nous le champ de la vie parcouru par notre saint Curé ; nous les voyions couvertes des plus riches et des plus abondantes moissons, et notre âme débordait, elle déborde encore de confiance, de douce et sainte espérance.

“ *Euge ! serve bone.* Courage ! bon et fidèle serviteur, entrez dans la joie de votre Maître.” L’espérance que fait naître cette parole appliquée au saint Curé d’Ars, est déjà par elle-même une consolation, dans les tristes et solennelles circonstances qui nous rassemblent ; toutefois, par une étude nouvelle et attentive du sens de ces paroles sacrées nous trouverons une consolation plus abondante et plus directe pour adoucir la rigueur du sacrifice que Dieu nous impose. Hélas ! ce sacrifice est bien grand ! Nous avons tous perdu beaucoup ; on ne remplace pas le Curé d’Ars !

Dieu lui-même, dans l’intérêt de sa gloire, ne veut pas multiplier ces prodiges de

grâces et de sainteté. La France entière a perdu un prêtre qui faisait son honneur, et que l'on venait visiter et consulter de toutes ses provinces. Les pauvres pécheurs ! ah ! qu'ils ont perdu, en perdant le Curé d'Ars ! Il avait, je ne sais, quelles paroles entrecoupées de sanglots et mêlées de larmes, auxquelles il était comme impossible de résister. Notre diocèse a perdu beaucoup ; le Curé d'Ars était sa gloire, il était aussi sa Providence ; il avait commencé à fonder l'œuvre des missions, qui lui était si chère. Plus de quatre-vingt-dix paroisses lui devront le bienfait perpétuel d'une mission tous les dix ans. Combien d'autres œuvres n'a-t-il pas encouragées, bénies, aidées ?

Votre évêque a bien perdu lui aussi ; il a perdu un père, un ami, un modèle ! Pauvre saint Curé ! it était tout tremblant, la première fois que nous le vîmes et qu'il nous reçut. Mgr. Devie et Mgr. Chalandon étaient si bons ! et ils étaient en particulier

si bons pour lui ! On se préoccupe toujours un peu à l'arrivée d'un nouvel évêque. Puis, il avait tant de respect pour la dignité épiscopale. Que de fois, sur cette place où nous sommes, il est venu revêtu de ses insignes de pasteur, au premier bruit de notre arrivée, et toujours il se prosternait à deux genoux, pour demander notre bénédiction, malgré les involontaires murmures qui, quelquefois s'échappaient de la foule étonnée qu'une si haute sainteté s'inclinât devant le simple caractère de la dignité et de l'autorité. Mais le sentiment de crainte qui avait pu gêner ses premiers rapports avec nous disparut bientôt quand nous l'eûmes pressé deux ou trois fois contre notre cœur, quand nous eûmes serré ses mains vénérées dans les nôtres, quand nous eûmes bien fixé notre regard dans son regard à lui si profond, si limpide, et si doux. Ah ! nous le croyons, nous en sommes sûr, il ne fit plus que nous aimer,

comme nous l'aimions tendrement nous-même.

Oui, je le répète, nous avons bien perdu ; mais ces paroles, “ *Euge! intra in gaudium.* ” Courage ! entrez dans la joie, doivent arrêter, si non les larmes que nous verrons, au moins nos plaintes, nos murmures, ou même de trop vifs regrets, “ Courage ! serviteur, entrez dans la joie de votre Maître ! ” C'est-à-dire, bon et fidèle serviteur, que votre journée est finie ; vous avez assez fait, assez travaillé ; venez, voici votre récompense et le prix de vos labeurs. Et telle est la pensée qui s'empara de notre esprit lorsque, après avoir béni le saint malade, prié avec lui et pour lui, nous fûmes comme porté par le flot des fidèles en larmes jusqu'au pied de l'autel ; là, nous assistâmes aux prières publiques ; là nous entendîmes un de ses fils bien-aimés, un de nos missionnaires qui restaient avec lui, demander un miracle pour le retour de ce père vénéré à la vie et à la santé ; et comme malgré nous,

nous ne pouvions nous associer à cette prière, nous nous contentâmes de nous abandonner et de nous unir à la volonté de Dieu. Eh quoi ! disions-nous, il a tant travaillé ! il dirait, sans doute, comme Saint-Martin à ses disciples en pleurs, “ *non recuso laborem*. Je ne refuse pas de travailler encore ! ” lui si bon, en voyant nos larmes, il eût consenti à vivre. Mais nous, vraiment pouvons-nous bien le demander ? Il est fatigué, épuisé, il semblait ne se soutenir que par un miracle ; Dieu ne nous l’a-t-il pas assez long-temps laissé ? Nous avons besoin de lui ; mais lui il a besoin de repos, il a droit à la récompense. Qu’il entre donc, qu’il entre enfin dans ces joies de son Dieu. *Intra in gaudium Domini tui !*

Et d’ailleurs, serait-il tellement perdu dans les joies du ciel, qu’il ne puisse encore penser à nous, prier pour nous, et nous servir ? Le ciel est si près de la terre, puisque c’est Dieu qui les unit ! Courage ! Courage !

Dans le sein de Dieu, où il repose, le Curé d'Ars n'est pas tout-entier perdu pour nous. Et voilà qu'un avertissement salutaire, sorti de cette tombe et des paroles que nous voudrions y graver, viendra comme un premier bienfait nous rappeler à tous que le saint Curé d'Ars peut faire encore du bien à nos âmes.

Pendant sa vie qu'eut répondu le saint Curé aux paroles que nous lui avons appliquées : “ Courage ! bon et fidèle serviteur, entrez dans les joies de votre Maître ? ” Le croiriez-vous, bien aimés, fidèles, et dois-je vous le dire ? Oui certes, et je demande à Dieu, au nom de celui que nous avons perdu, que m'a parole soit tout épiscopale, tout apostolique.

Non-seulement le bon et saint Curé eût répondu avec l'Evangile : Je ne suis qu'un serviteur inutile, que m'appellez vous bon et fidèle ? . . . mais encore il eut éprouvé le désir, dirai-je la tentation, de se traiter plus

sévèrement. C'était là une de ces peines secrètes dont je vous ai entretenus et par lesquelles Dieu éprouvait son serviteur : "Monsieur le Curé," lui disait un des missionnaires, "comment pouvez-vous résister à la tentation de vaine gloire, au milieu de ce concours sans cesse renouvelé." "Ah, mon enfant," lui répondit le saint prêtre, dites plutôt comment je résiste à la tentation de crainte, de découragement, et de désespoir." Etrange extrémité de la grâce de Dieu, qui nous explique la persistance de ce bon et vénéré pasteur à vouloir quitter sa cure d'Ars pour mourir dans la pénitence et la retraite. "Ah ! Monseigneur," nous disait-il, "il y a quinze jours à peine, je vous demanderai dans quelque temps à me laisser partir pour pleurer les péchés de ma vie." "Mais, mon bon Curé," lui disions-nous, "les larmes des pécheurs que Dieu vous envoie valent bien les vôtres. Ne me parlez pas ainsi, je ne viendrai, plus vous voir." Et toutes nos

paroles d'affection et d'encouragement ne paraissaient pas le convaincre.

Il était à ses propres yeux un pauvre pécheur ; il redoutait la charge pastorale et craignait de l'avoir mal remplie. Les jugements de Dieu le faisaient trembler par moments. Les derniers jours de sa vie se sont passés dans un calme profond ; le mot divin avait été sans doute murmuré à son oreille. *Euge !* Mais dans sa première maladie, dans cette sorte de mort par laquelle il plut à Dieu de le faire passer, il y a une quinzaine d'années, pour donner à vos prières une éclatante et si douce consécration, on put remarquer les perplexités de son âme. Et quel avertissement retirerons-nous de cette révélation sur l'intérieur du bon Curé ? Ames timorées, âmes trop craintives, si nombreuses peut-être au pèlerinage d'Ars, apprenez à résister comme le saint Curé à des craintes trop vives et contre lesquelles vous prémunit l'obéissance. Cette tentation

fut pour lui le *ne magnitudo revelationem extollat* de Saint-Paul. Dieu par ses frayeurs sauvait l'humilité de cette belle âme ; il donnait plus de mérite au sentiment de confiance qui dominait après tout dans sa vie ; il lui inspirait par la compassion et l'épreuve ces mots qu'il vous disait et qui vous ont fait tant de bien. Savez-vous quel baume secret s'attachait à ses consolantes paroles ? C'était comme le parfum de ses larmes, de ses prières, en un mot, de toutes les grâces que Dieu versait sur cette blessure de son cœur qui était aussi, qui est peut-être encore la vôtre.

Mais vous surtout âmes indifférentes, âmes présomptueuses, âmes si rares dans cette pieuse réunion, mais que le retentissement de ces touchantes obsèques pourra atteindre au milieu du monde, sachez-le bien le Curé d'Ars, le saint Curé d'Ars redoutait par moments les jugements de Dieu.

Exemple éclatant donné à un siècle où

l'on craint si peu; où la crainte s'efface pour faire place non pas à l'amour mais à la torpeur, à l'indifférence et à l'oubli. Oh ! quand donc vous réveillerez-vous ? Quand donc craindrez-vous, vous qui devriez tant craindre ! Quand ferez-vous sérieusement la plus sérieuse de toutes les affaires ?

Pour vous, cher et vénéré Curé, la tentation est finie, plus de crainte. Nous en avons la confiance, vous êtes entré désormais dans la joie, le repos et la paix. *Intra in gaudium Domini tui.*

Vous y avez été introduit par cette Mère de miséricorde que vous aimiez tant et dont vous portiez le nom ; vous y avez été introduit par Jean-Baptiste, votre patron, ce saint si humble et si grand ; par Sainte-Philomène, votre patronne d'adoption, qui semblait revivre en vous et cacher son nom sous le vôtre, comme vous cachiez votre nom sous le sien.

Ah ! de ce séjour de la gloire et du bonheur, veillez encore, veillez toujours sur

nous. Char et guide d'Israël, laissez-nous votre double esprit de dévoûment au service de Dieu et de crainte tempérée, dominée par la confiance et l'amour.

Laissez-le à cette communauté de missionnaires qui se fait gloire des sentiments fraternels que vous lui portiez.

Laissez-le à vos chers, à vos bien-aimés paroissiens d'Ars, qui ne se consoleront de vous avoir perdu qu'en pensant à vous, qu'en vous aimant chaque jour davantage.

Laissez-le au clergé de ce diocèse si saintement fier de vous compter parmi ses membres.

Laissez-le à l'Evêque, si triste et si heureux en ce moment de parler de vous. Et sachez bien que le jour le plus beau, le plus désiré de son épiscopat serait celui où la voix infaillible de l'Eglise lui permettrait d'acclamer solennellement, et de chanter en votre honneur: *Euge! serve bone et fidelis, intra in gaudium Domini tui!*

Amen.

CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

WE have still a few remarks to make before we take our final leave of the Curé d'Ars.

The reader of the preceding pages may perhaps be desirous to learn whether the extraordinary fame of M. Vianney has in any measure declined since his death, or if he is still held in the same reputation as ever in the Roman Catholic world, and especially if he still lives in the hearts and affections of the devoted people amongst whom his lot was cast.

In reply to the former of these questions, we think we may affirm that the reputation of the Curé d'Ars, as one of the most holy men, and one of the greatest saints of modern times, has been ever and constantly

increasing since he closed his earthly career. We can indeed, ourselves, testify to the universal love and reverence with which he is regarded by his own countrymen.

In the convent of the *Sainte Enfance* in Versailles, we were shown a large painting, representing the Last Judgment, in which the Curé d'Ars forms a prominent figure. He is represented in the act of ascending into heaven, whilst two angels are seen coming down to meet him, and bearing in their hands the crown with which they are about to encircle his head.

The nuns in this convent breathed the name of the *holy Curé* with the same feelings of love and reverence as though they had been speaking of one of the most exalted of their saints. We mention this, not as a solitary instance ; we believe that had we visited any other religious community in France the impression made upon our minds would have been the same.

In reply to the latter of the questions to which we have pointed as likely to suggest itself to the mind of the reader, we have been informed by friends who recently, in the year '66, visited Ars, in order to inform themselves on this subject, that they found the name of Vianney still on every lip ; his memory still fresh in every heart. The people, indeed, appeared rather to speak of him as though he were still in some mysterious way present amongst them, than as having gone to his final rest.

The popular faith in his power to work miracles was strong as ever. Every one was full of anecdotes of the marvellous cures he had effected ; as well as of praises of his goodness, his piety, his charity.

The chapel in which so large a portion of his mortified life was passed, is still lined with the crutches and other aids to the afflicted and infirm, which it is affirmed were left there by the patients who had gone up

crippled and helpless, and who were immediately and, as it is believed, miraculously cured.

We have said that the popular faith in M. Vianney's power to work miracles was strong as ever—we might have said stronger than ever.

It is confidently believed by the inhabitants of Ars, that already miracles have been effected through his intercession since his departure. One poor woman lately affirmed—and apparently with entire faith—that her child, who had long been afflicted with a sad and hopeless malady, suddenly received a partial cure whilst she was making a pilgrimage to the grave of Vianney. She was fully persuaded that a further perseverance in this pious duty would result in its complete recovery. We have not since had an opportunity of learning how far the poor woman's expectations have been realised.

A gentleman who the travellers to whom we have alluded met in the neighbourhood of Ars—and who was well acquainted with the Curé—stated that he was a man of the most remarkable coolness of judgment, and by no means likely to be carried away, by the fervour of his imagination, to any extravagant practice or belief. We know not how far the reader may share in this opinion. We mention these facts simply as curious and interesting.

To the Curé d'Ars himself it is of little matter whether his memory be applauded or contemned. We believe that he rests with the Lord. We cannot but believe him to have been a true and most zealous Christian, in spite of those errors and superstitions to which, as a devout member of the Church of Rome, he so fondly clung. To our own mind, his happy and peaceful end, the fearless and trustful spirit with which he approached the final hour,

would alone be sufficient evidence of his sincerity.

But although we do not hesitate to express our belief in the true piety of M. Vianney, we are very far from agreeing with a statement which lately met our eye, from an able pen, and a member of the Church of England: it was to this effect, "That in no other than the Church of Rome could Vianney have effected so great a work, or made so deep an impression upon the mind of Christendom."

From our point of view, this is almost equivalent to maintaining that Christian truth, adulterated with error, and mingled with the fond fancies and extravagant superstitions of man's devising, is fitted to be more influential, and to make a more profound impression upon the hearts of men, than the pure and simple truth, as taught by the Lord himself, and his Apostles.

It is, however, with quite an opposite error that we are more immediately concerned. We have known many devout Protestants to whom it would be hard to believe that any true Christian could exist within the pale of the Church of Rome ; many others who, though, from their superior education, they cannot be ignorant of the many distinguished Christians who have lived and died in that communion, are still far slower to recognise Christian piety in a member of the Roman Catholic Church than in one of their own, and who appear to regard their fellow-Christians in that Church as though they were responsible for, and had imbibed by an act of will, those errors and superstitions which, from their earliest childhood, they have been taught to believe.

We cannot refrain from the hope that the perusal of the life of the zealous and self-denying priest, whose history we have sketched, may tend, in some, to soften these

prejudices, and, it may be, to induce in their hearts feelings of more cordial sympathy and brotherly love towards those whom they esteem less favoured than themselves.

THE END.

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